

SKIING HERITAGE

JOURNAL of the INTERNATIONAL SKIING HISTORY ASSOCIATION



Volume 10 Number 3

Third Issue 1998 (September)

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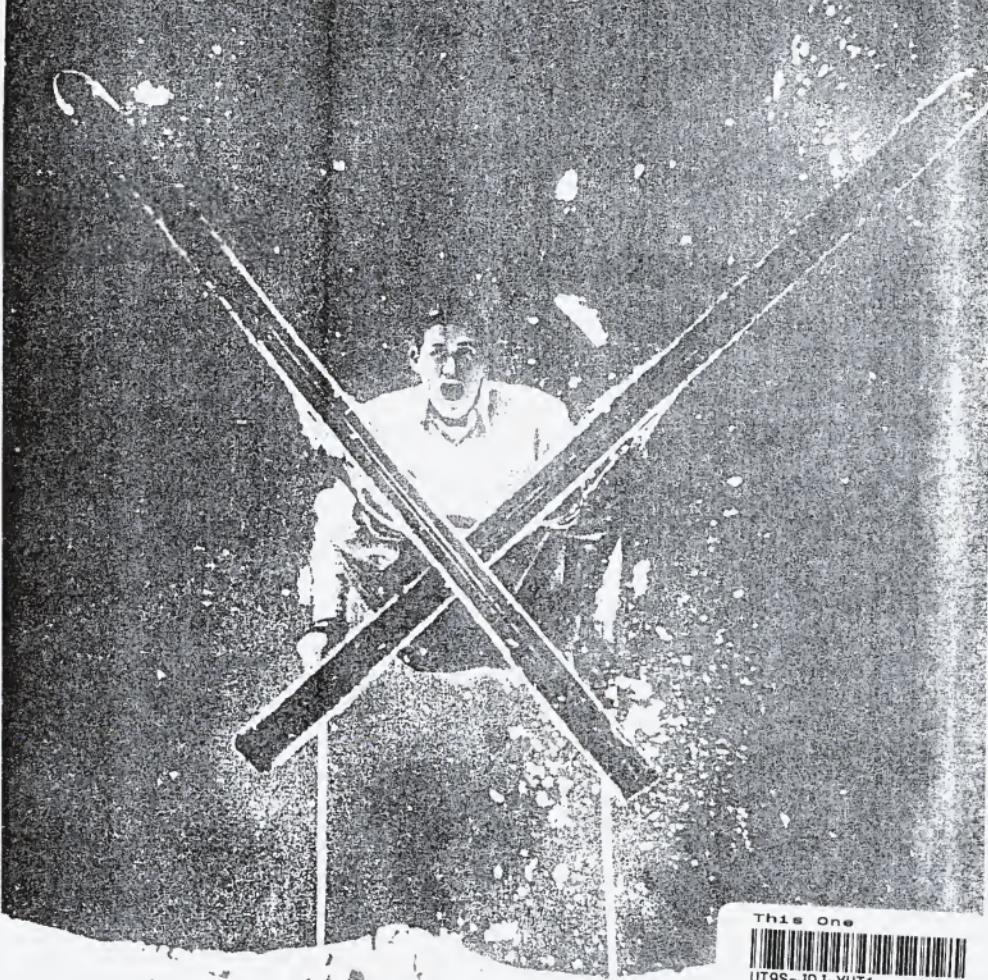
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The Forgotten Photographs of Helene Fischer



This One



READERS' RESPONSE

What Did It Say?



Dear Editor:

Re *Sayonara Sapporo* in the last issue, what is the translation of the Japanese symbols following the story title?

Carol Price
Paonia, Colorado

The Japanese characters (shown above) spell out "Olympics." They were drawn for *Heritage* by Tatsuo Yamaguchi, a Japanese artist living in New York's Catskills—ed

Snowboard-Ski Accidents

Dear Editor:

Re your editorial regarding accidents: there are too many snowboarder-skiier collisions and there is a reason for this. Most skiers have no idea boarders cannot turn on a dime. Nor do boarders have the equivalent of a snowplow to brake going downhill. Slowing a board requires rotating it 90 degrees to the fall line, which causes the board to shoot to the side at least half its length.

In addition, since boarders face right as they ride, they have a blind spot on the left. Often in riding down the slope I have heard

First Issue 1998

SKIING HERITAGE

FREESTYLE
IN THE
BEGINNING
by Morten Lund
with Peter Miller

TAMARA
MCKINNEY
TRIUMPHANT
by Nick Howe

SKIING'S HIGH MORTALITY

a noise and then seen a skier zipping along 18 inches off my left shoulder. If I had carved to the left a second earlier to slow down, we would have collided.

Both riders and skiers have to learn to respect each other's need for space.

Will Lund
Falmouth, Maine

Will Lund is the editor's nephew; he heads the Maine Office of Consumer Credit Regulation. An off-season triathlon competitor, he switched from skiing to snowboarding to keep up with his wife Nancy, the only female snowboarder on the Sugarloaf Safety Patrol, and their sons Alex and Nick. Alex finished seventh in the 1998 USSA National Junior Snowboarding championships and already has several sponsors—ed

Brookie Heard From

Dear Editor:

Your publication is wonderful and must keep going. Begin to put it on a paying basis. At least cover your costs, and become a going business.

Brooks Dodge
Jackson, New Hampshire

Brookie was the highest-scoring member of the 1956 Olympic team at Cortina with a fourth in the slalom, and was profiled in the recent issue of *Yankee* by editorial board member Nick Howe. In regard to putting *Heritage* on a paying basis, this year *Heritage* raised its annual subscription rate from \$25 to \$30. But it will take another 800 subscribers to break even. The editor urges members to send the outside "wrap cover" to friends likely to join. Until the journal gets the added subscriptions, it is forced to rely on the generosity of members who give gifts in addition to their subscription in order to make up *Heritage's* deficit every year—ed

A Franconia Ski Family

Dear Editor:

What prompts this is the picture of Hans Thorner in your last issue. My husband and I lived in Franconia for 30 years. He ran ski shops in the area for Carroll Reed. The Thorners were great friends and ran a ski lodge here before moving to Vermont to found Magic Mountain. He is 90, his wife

INSIDE

Heritage Pictorial:

HELENE FISCHER

FORGOTTEN PHOTOGRAPHER

A pioneer woman photographer brought a sophisticated touch to documenting the early days of the sport of alpine skiing

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THE ROOTS OF FREESTYLE

PART II

The hot-dog breakthrough into the mainstream came from an integration of many historic trends by realizing their dramatic potential

BY MORTEN LUND

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TIPS AND TALES

Miscellaneous happenings with some bearing on the history of skiing

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THE SEER OF SENIOR SKIING

Lloyd Lambert, his heart and soul in skiing, left a legacy of great encouragement for a lifetime of comradeship in the sport

BY CHERYL THOMAS

PAGE 32

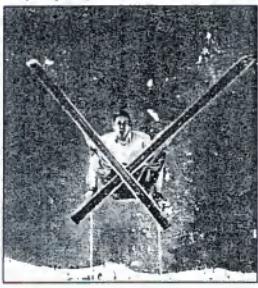
FIRST OF ALL:

OTTO LANG'S STEEL POLE

PAGE 36

COVER:

Helene Fischer catches a crossed quersprung at Lake Placid ca. 1940



89, and they live in Londonderry, Vermont.

On the cover shot of Sig Buchmayr by Winston Pote: Sig was with my husband and myself the night our triplets were born. Winston Pote took a picture of our daughter skiing at Cannon for one of his calendars. Heritage brought them all to mind again.

Mrs. L.C. Ahlgren
New London
New Hampshire

On Films, Museums and McKinneys

Dear Editor:

Last December, *Skiing* magazine gave Warren Miller credit for being "the father of ski cinematography." But none of my old friends I talked to at the recent Veteran Ski Instructor's Reunion agreed with this statement at all. In particular, I have it from Wolfie Lert about the German film maker, Arnold Fanck, who started making pictures in the 1920s. In my own viewing experience, the films of Dr. Frank Howard and John Jay both predated the films of Warren Miller. A good timeline of ski cinematographers might make interesting reading.

In reference to *Skiing Heritage*'s pick of ski museums listed in the article on the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in the Second Issue 1997, add D. Boyd Crawford, 1710 29th Street, Ogden, Utah. His Evolution of Skiing displays mounted in his garage are very instructive. He often lectures on ski history at Utah schools and ski clubs illustrated by exhibits from his museum.

Commenting on Nick Howe's Tamara McKinney piece in the First Issue 1998: although most of the coaches he lists for the McKinney family were part of the Sierra Nevada ski scene, most were of short tenure.

One coach, however, Rusty Crook, has been there most of his life. He has been a dominant figure in race coaching and still is an active instructor and instruction clinician. I know he was a close friend of

Second Issue 1998



the whole McKinney clan and should be given credit as the dominant race coach for the "team McKinney."

Keep up the good work. *Skiing Heritage* gets better every issue!

Alan Mundt

Reno, Nevada

*One aim of the International Skiing History Association is to counter-balance the trend—evident from the erroneous claim made in *Skiing*—toward a "born-yesterday" ski culture. Warren Miller's active career—which began in 1949—lasted such a long time that most skiers can't remember any movie maker before Warren. In fact, Warren retired just last year from narrating his annual lecture films for his son, who owns Warren Miller Films.*

Miller was preceded by at least three major ski film makers. The first is Arnold Fanck, as you suggest, a man who not only preceded Miller but was the first serious ski film maker; Fanck's initial film, on ski mountaineering, was released in 1913 and entitled 4628 Meter hoch auf Skiern. Besteigung des Monte Rosa (4628 Meters High on Skis. The Ascent of Monte Rosa). This was followed by Fanck's Das Wunder des Schneeschuhlaufs, starring Hannes Schneider, premiering in 1920, the first how-to-ski film made—Arberberg technique, naturally.

*Fanck's further extensive collaboration with Schneider was detailed in *Heritage* as The Films of Hannes Schneider, published in the Spring Issue 1993.*

Sidney Shurcliff and Frank Howard were the first U.S. ski lecture film makers. Then, ten years before Miller came John Jay, the first career ski lecture film maker. The Spring-Summer 1996 story on Jay also com-

SKIING HERITAGE

Journal of the International Skiing History Association

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Morten Lund

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mented on the work of Howard and Shurcliff.

On ski museums: the list accompanying *Heritage's* story on the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame and Museum named only the large ones recognized by the USSA. But there are at least a dozen smaller museums in the U.S.: I.S.H.A. board members Jimmie and Jerry Nunn have a modest museum in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Glenn Parkinson's in Gorham, Maine—to name two.

Finally, all credit to Rusty Crook for his dedication to coaching; his name ought to have been among the names of the coaches listed as Tamara's mentors—ed

READERS RESPONSE continued

Remembering Goon Skis

Dear Editor:

The goon ski craze mentioned in *The Roots of Freestyle* reminded me of the first classy ski resort I ever visited, Mt. Cranmore. I was there with my mother, her sister and husband, my aunt and uncle. When was it? The early forties or just after the war. I was wearing my first skis with steel edges. I think they were either Splitkeins or Northlands. They were laminated and glossy. The ski shop's room where they had mounted my Dovre bindings—bear traps with hitch-downs for the cable—was heavy with the scent of ski wax. I remember riding the clicketying Skimobile and shaking hands with Hannes Schneider but, most of all, I remember my Uncle Cally, up on the mountain in a group of men—I think there were about six of them. They were holding hands and wearing goon skis and doing a skiing crack-the-whip. I was bug-eyed as I watched them skate, do three-sixties and take wonderful spills, laughing their way down the mountain.

Peter Miller
Waterbury, Vermont

*Peter Miller is one of the very few to successfully combine ski writing and photography during a long career of contributing to periodicals. He has now self-published two books, *Vermont People*, and *People of the Great Plains*; he is planning to reissue the first imminently—ed*

Searching for Peppi

Dear Editor:

I applaud the recent informative issue of *Skiing Heritage*. The ski world is greatly blessed in having such an outstanding, professional history journal. It has been fascinating to read so much previously unrecorded ski history, documented by such careful research.

Your issue with the cover on Aspen coincidentally reached me only a week before the *Aspen Times* ran a story on former Aspenite David Miller, who has been collecting material for years on the career of my brother Peppi Teichner, an instructor in the Aspen ski school in the winter of 1948-49, as the Heritage story on Aspen noted.

My brother's life was a dramatic one,

Peppi fled Germany in the early 1930s because he hated the Nazis who were taking over. He landed in Spain and coached the Spanish national team from 1933 to 1937. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, he joined the Loyalists fighting General Franco, backed by the Nazis. Franco's forces triumphed, and Peppi fled to the U.S. in 1938. He taught at Sun Valley in the early 1940s and skied for Otto Lang's training film for the Army shot at Sun Valley in May, 1939; he joined the 87th Mountain Infantry at Mt. Rainier as a mountaineering and skiing instructor. After that, he taught at Aspen during the 1948-49 season and in Michigan, where he taught and coached skiing at LeClenau School. Evidently, David Miller met Peppi when Peppi took Miller's class on a trip to Aspen sometime in the early 1950. (My brother died in 1957.)

Twenty years later, in the early 1970s, Miller, who was then 60 years old, became interested in documenting Midwest skiing. But, in visiting Midwest ski areas, Miller found much material on Peppi which he described as "...old newspaper clippings culled from basement record boxes... letters from him [Peppi] and pictures of some of the people he encountered while teaching."

Miller soon came to see Peppi's career as exemplifying the best spirit of the sport but that the published record did not reflect that. As Miller said, "[Peppi's] name does not even come up. I think that is a disgrace. I don't think he gets the recognition he deserved."

Miller decided to write Peppi's life story. As part of this effort, he came to Chicago to interview me. His ultimate goal, Miller said, was to publish a booklet on Peppi's life and distribute the booklet wherever Peppi had lived and taught.

Miller planned to return to his home base in Ashland, Oregon, to finish writing the biography. I have not yet seen the booklet in print but I hope he manages to get it published.

Helmut Teichner
Chicago, Illinois

Dave Miller, wherever you are, Skiing Heritage would be delighted to review any book that you manage to publish on the adventurous life and times of Peppi Teichner—ed

Let's Hear It for Clif

Dear Editor:

How about a story on Clif Taylor?

Marty Keller
Golden, Colorado

*The editor co-authored *Ski In A Day with Clif* back in 1960, and still believes that ski schools could convert many more novices into lifetime skiers by using GLM rather than standard teaching. A letter from Clif, now a real estate agent at Copper Mountain, Colorado, appears on page 9 of this issue—ed*

Nice Sign, Needs Work

Dear Editor:

In Sugar Hill, New Hampshire, recently, I shot this sign mentioning my old boss Sig Buchmayr, the first Austrian to come to this country and teach skiing. I thought you might want to have this photo should you ever write an article on Sig.



Wouldn't it be nice if I.S.H.A. had a pin we could wear on winter alpine hats, caps, sweater or blazer?

Sewall Williams
Waitsfield, Vermont

The sign could stand editing. To begin with, Peckett's first teacher in 1929 was not Sig Buchmayr of Salzburg but Herman Glatfelder of Germany. Secondly, Peckett's teaching slope lies west, not east, of the sign. Third, Peckett's-on-Sugar Hill was not the first ski school in the U.S. There were previous nordic classes in the Poconos and a mix of nordic and alpine was taught at the Lake Placid Club. Otto Schniebs was teaching alpine technique around Boston in 1928. Peckett's, though, did offer the first pure alpine technique at an American resort—ed

Missing Diversity

Dear Editor:

The Third Issue 1997 was another great one. How about doing an issue dedicated to jumping? And include an article on the great four-way competitors like Gordon Wren, Alf Engen, Crosby Perry-Smith and Marvin Crawford? Marvin won every four-way meet he entered for the University of Denver.

Speaking of college skiing, the schools have ruined college skiing by eliminating jumping and downhill. It has gone even further. Eastern coaches now refuse to go West every other year to take part in the nationals because they are reluctant to compete at high altitude in the Rockies. I can't help feeling that their teams would love to ski in the West every other year.

On another subject, the second verse of the Norwegian jumping song which ran in the Hall of Fame story goes:

*And when the jumping is over,
And the day is done,
They come down into the town,
To have a little fun.
Oh, the small and the big,
The big and the small,
They congregate in Svenska Hall,
They drink the foaming brew,
And then when they are through,
The president pulls the string.
And then all begin to sing:
Chorus: Ya, ya, vi skal ha
Lutefisk or lefse
Brennevin og sius!*

We had jumping meets every Sunday in one or other of the Twin Cities, St. Paul and Minneapolis, before World War II, with many of the events held at Theodore Wirth Park, just west of downtown Minneapolis. There were three girls who jumped and they were as good as some of the boys. Many ordinary skiers jumped as well as skiing downhill way back then.

Jim Ellertson
Boulder, Colorado

The nation's ski clubs promoting jumping supplied the infrastructure for the transition to alpine skiing during the 1930s and 1940s. Speaking of the so-called Norwegian jump song, it is unlikely Norwegian jumpers would gather at Svenska Hall—except to fight. The Swedes ruled Norway until after 1900 when Norwegians revolted; they are still not over the grudge—ed

A Dartmouth Racer

Dear Editor:

I am delighted to become a subscriber to *Skiing Heritage*. I went to Dartmouth, Class of 1940, and was on the ski team under coach Walter Prager from 1936 to 1940. Among my teammates were Dick Durrance, Ted Hunter, Warren Chivers, and the Bradleys. Percy Rideout was captain of the team during my senior year. Chapman Wentworth and Bob Skinner were very good downhill skiers from the Class of 1940.

After I graduated, I worked on the *Rutland Herald* and taught for two years at Pico Peak when it was operated by Brad and Janet Mead. I saw Andy Mead ski when she was six years old or so. The very small school was headed by Karl Acker, probably the most graceful skier I've ever known. He taught me a lot more than I ever learned from Prager.

My skiing ended in World War II when I became a bomber pilot and was shot down, became a prisoner of war and lost a leg. I didn't ski again, although I know that many amputees like Diana Golden do ski. A few years ago, I published a book about my wartime experiences as a bomber pilot, called *Milk Run*. Anyway, I am happy to be a member of I.S.H.A.

Bill Chapin
Sonoma, California.

Norse History Specialist Corrects Heritage

Dear Editor:

As a new reader of *Skiing Heritage*, I am delighted to find that you have adopted a zero-defects campaign to help eliminate the nagging little errors that creep into ski literature. Having spent the last ten years putting together a slide show on Norse ski history, I am especially sensitive to some of the errors that have been repeated.

In *Skiing Heritage*, errors that need correction: in Volume 10 no. I, the Hemmestveit brothers were not twins. Torjus was born circa 1861 and Mikkel about two years later. They did jump together in the U.S.

In the same volume, page 14, the paragraphs about the all-Norway ski competition in Christiania should mention that the first in 1867, was won by Elling

Bakken of Trysil. The Telemarkers and Sondre Norheim did not enter until the next year's competition in 1868 when they skied from Morgedal roughly 100 miles to compete (not 60 nor 150 as reported in previous editions of your journal).

At this second competition, Sondre Norheim, age 43, came in a clear first, Elling Bakken second. Two younger Telemarkers were third and fourth or fourth and fifth, depending on what account you read.

The great Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen wrote that he had been inspired by the exploits of the Telemarkers—whom he saw skiing when he was 12, in 1873. Nansen's first crossing of the Greenland ice cap in 1888, on skis, made good his boyhood vow to practice until he could match the fabulous men from Telemark.

Roger Olsen
Boulder, Colorado

Early Skier at Sky Tavern

Dear Editor:

Reading Part II of the Tamara McKinney story in the Third Issue 1997 brought a flood of memories. As a youngster, I skied at Sky Tavern, at Slide Mountain and at Mt. Rose, as Tamara did. I started skiing at Sky Tavern some 50 years ago, then graduated to the new Slide Mountain ski area where I skied with Tamara's mother, Frances McKinney. We had lots of fun taking lessons together.

I was reminded of an incident that occurred on the opening day of the chairlift that had been built from Sky Tavern to Slide Mountain. A lot of non-skiing spectators from Sky Tavern were hauled up the hill to see the view. But when they seated nonskiers in the chairs for the downhill ride, they overloaded the lift and it started to take off. As I recall, a man named Warren Hart was able to stop the lift by thrusting a length of lumber into the bull wheel. This braked the lift with a jolt—everyone aboard survived.

My husband Scollay and I are 75 and 74 and still skiing. Scollay was in the 10th Mountain and fought in Italy. We literally met on the ski slopes 30 years ago and have skied together ever since.

Anna Schmidt Parker
Placerville, California

READERS RESPONSE continued

Haug and Haugen: explaining it again—

Dear Editor:

In the March 1998 issue, a letter to the editor from Alan Baker questioned the fact that Anders Haugen was indeed the winner of the 1924 Olympic bronze medal [in jumping]. Enclosed you will find information to support the fact that Anders Haugen was awarded the bronze medal in 1974. In fact as you can see from one of the newspaper articles, there is a picture of



Haugen in 1928 Olympic uniform

Anders Haugen receiving his medal from Anna Marie Magnussen, who is the daughter of the late Thorleif Haug. She presented the medal to Haugen in a ceremony held on September 12, 1974, in Oslo, Norway.

I hope the information I have sent will still any doubts that Anders Haugen was indeed the first American in history to win an Olympic medal in nordic ski competition, during the first winter Olympic Games held in Chamonix, France, in 1924.

Evelyn J. Valente-Heikkila
Assistant Manager
U.S. National
Ski Hall of Fame
Ishpeming, Michigan

Alan Baker, the owner-publisher of the



Haugen in an Olympic coat, c. 1980

Ellsworth American in Maine wrote to inquire if the International Olympic Committee has ever commented on Heritage's original story. It hasn't.

Ms. Valente-Heikkila enclosed a report dated 1980, from Henry J. Pfleiger, a member of the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame Museum and Historical Committee, a former president of the Milwaukee Ski Club.

[The Pfleiger Report:]

First American to Win An Olympic Medal in Ski Jumping

Anders Haugen was born in Oslo, Norway in 1889 [actually, in Telemark, Norway, in 1888—ed]. He came to Milwaukee around 1909. The Milwaukee Ski Club built a jumping scaffold in 1912 at Lake Nagawicka... primarily for Anders, because of his jumping ability. The first jumping competition at the Nagawicka slide was held on January 2, 1913. Anders Haugen won that event.

Because of poor snow conditions in southern Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Ski Club sent Anders to other areas having snow, particularly Northwestern Wisconsin, where

he finally joined another ski club. In 1924, Anders was named to the 1924 U.S. jumping team that was to compete in the Winter Olympics at Chamonix, France. He was named team captain.

Anders made the longest jump during the Chamonix competition. Unfortunately, in computing the points for both distance and form for all competitors, the judges made an error and, as a result, Anders was given fourth place.

Fifty years later, the error in computation was discovered. In 1974, Anders was invited to Oslo, Norway, to be presented with the bronze third-place medal erroneously awarded to the Norwegian, Thorleif Haug.

Henry J. Pfleiger
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

In addition to the above letters sent to the editor, William Banks Berry sent the following letter directly to the President of I.S.H.A.:

Dear Mason Beekley,

...I have enclosed for your edification what *Sports Illustrated* published [in 1997] regarding my dear friend Anders Haugen. I officially represented the United States Ski Association during the awards ceremony. Regardless of what editor Mort Lund published in *Skiing Heritage*, the sportsmanship of all Norwegian skiers cannot be downgraded by the drivel that has sneaked into *Skiing Heritage*. I was there in Oslo for the awards ceremony and sometime back sent you a copy of my official report of that sportsmanlike event, reflecting what the Olympic Games stand for.

William Banks Berry
Reno, Nevada

The editor's reply to Bill Berry and Evelyn Valente-Heikkila follows:

First of all, the editor has no prejudice against Norwegians. The son of a Norwegian competition jumper who emigrated to America in 1925, the editor yields to no one in his admiration for the sportsmanship of Norwegian skiers.

And, yes, the ceremony in 1974 at Oslo was an awesome example of sportsmanship: a medal won by a Norwegian was presented in person to an American (Norwegian-born,

Haug and Haugen continued

granted). Anders Haugen, who had in retrospect seemingly scored higher than Haug. But did this ceremony determine the official winner of the 1924 Olympic bronze jump-



Haugen gets a hug from Thorleif Haugen's daughter as she hands over her father's medal in 1974; Haugen, one of America's great jumpers, once held the world record; he died in 1984, several years after the picture opposite was taken of him wearing a borrowed Olympic coat.

ing medal? This is a question with a simple solution somehow overlooked by the authors of the letters above.

Again, let it be recorded that the editor is second to none in esteem for William Banks Berry, U.S. National Ski Historian Emeritus and the journalist who rediscovered the Sierra Nevada niners' races of the mid-1800s. At this editor's initiative, Berry received the I.S.H.A. Lifetime Achievement Award in Ski Journalism in 1994.

And again, as an Honored Member of the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame, Class of 1996, the editor is fully aware of the great services that the Hall of Fame staff, including Ms. Valente-Heikkila, renders to the preservation of ski history in this country.

But now, to the matter at hand:

Back in 1974, those who sincerely felt that Haugen should be given the medal had two choices. One was to petition the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for a review of the scoring of the 1924 Olympic

jump, requesting that, if the judges' compilation be found in error, the medal forthwith be officially awarded to Haugen.

The IOC, after all, is the body of officials which approves the awarding of the Olympic medals by the national Olympic committee of the country which holds the Olympics—in this case, France. An appeal to the IOC would have been fraught with risk. The IOC might well balk at changing an award of 50 years standing; also an appeal would entail considerable delay and the big ceremony had already been scheduled at Oslo.

So the Norwegian Olympic Committee understandably took the route of holding a fine party with much speech-making but without official IOC sanction, which would have been hard to come by. The IOC is not known for delegating its powers of review—in fact, it never has. Since neither Haug's daughter nor the Norwegian Olympic Committee were empowered to make an official switch of the award from Haug to Haugen, the ceremony was simply a warm, unofficial gesture, pure public relations—not that there is anything wrong with that.

The dramatic high point of the wonderful celebration put on by the Norwegians (who love to hold celebrations) came when Haug's daughter handed her father's medal to Haugen. Understandably, wishful thinkers were thereby beguiled into believing this gesture was an official act of the IOC—when in fact it was not.

Physical possession of an Olympic medal does not magically confer the official honor of having won it. The late Anders Haugen, therefore, is not at this present moment an Olympic medalist—unless something has changed at IOC headquarters in Lausanne since the original piece ran in Heritage in the First Issue 1997. Neither is Haugen, then, the first American to win an Olympic ski medal. Gretchen Fraser is, having won two medals at St. Moritz in 1948.

This is to cast doubt neither on the possibility of an error in the original scoring in 1924 nor on the abilities of Haugen, one-time world distance record holder and one of the best jumpers the U.S. ever had.

The Norwegians, to re-state it, made a brilliant move, getting credit for honoring Haugen without actually having to carry a controversial appeal to the IOC. They managed to give the medal away and yet hang onto it, a classic demonstration of having one's cake and eating it, too.

Once mainstream journalists got hold of the story, it was too good to spoil by onerous fact-checking. So Sports Illustrated stands in error. (To dispel the notion of prejudice, again: the editor spent seven illuminating years on the *Sports Illustrated* staff.) Likewise Skiing, and Aftenposten, along with the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame, the U.S. Ski Association and a number of compilers of Olympic record books—each and all misled by the glamor of a gala event into assuming that the dramatic transfer of the medal was an IOC-sanctioned move.

The original story in *Skiing Heritage's* First Issue 1997 was researched by the editor and journalist John Auran; it fully answers all objections raised above to anyone who takes the trouble to read the story.

What we have here is a shining example of manufacturing mythology. Now myth often carries a greater truth than mere fact. But, even granted that this is so in the present case, myth should never be confused with history—as it has happened here, beginning with William Banks Berry.

In his 1974 letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame, dated September 4, Berry, who was about to depart for Norway to represent the U.S. Ski Association at the ceremony, wrote: "Anders Haugen is about to receive his Olympic medal....This is just another good example of a quality program paying off. Spread the word."

William Banks Berry has a great nose for a good story, but here he was bewitched by the vision of a Haugen triumph.

From a rational point of view, this is another case of "dramatic values," heady stuff like retribution and triumph, overwhelming the real facts. This can and does happen even at the top levels of journalism. In a recent example, the CNN-Time Inc. report accusing the U.S. of using poison gas during the Vietnam War, a report which turned out to lack convincing proof of the kind needed for such a grave accusation. Similarly, asserting the reassignment of an Olympic medal, the highest honor in skiing, needs to be grounded on proof positive. Now, the IOC may have had a drastic attack of heart and may have recently met to reassess the medal. But, since Heritage a year ago pursued IOC for two weeks to get the facts, the editor hereby invites the critics to take their turn and ferret out the truth for themselves. Suggestion: call the IOC office in Lausanne. The number in Switzerland is 21-621-6111—ed

READERS RESPONSE continued

10th Mountain Historian Needs Information

Dear Editor:

As a longtime subscriber, it occurs to me that Heritage readers form an amazing pool of knowledge: I am writing a book about the clothing and equipment developed by the U.S. Army for the 10th Mountain Division during World War II and have a question regarding a company that made skis for the U.S. Army during the war, the Propeller Woodworking Company of Canada, Ltd. One document places the company in Denver but I can find no reference to it there. Was there an American subsidiary or not?

A second question is about the steel ski poles approved in 1942 as an alternative to the Army split bamboo poles. They were included in the Quartermaster Corps specification QQMG 6B on June 17, 1942. Does anyone recall them?

W. Michel Myers
Tualatin, Oregon

Otto Lang invented and A&T manufactured the first steel pole. Major John Woodward, of the 10th Mountain, later a partner in A&T, just elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame, might know; the story of Lang and his steel pole runs on page 36—ed

Otto Lang and the first steel pole



Skiing in the Golden Age

Dear Editor:

I thoroughly enjoy your publication and want to see it prosper. Having been a skier since the early 1930s as part of a skiing family, I have lived much of what you have been writing about. Our family skied with Betty Woolsey, coach Friedl Pfeifer and the rest of the U.S. Women's team in the late 1930s on a steep pasture in Cornwall Bridge in Connecticut. My uncle was a member of the New York Amateur Ski Club and skied often with Roland Palmedo and with Merrill Prentice, who designed the ASCNY emblem, the Asslander.

John C. Calhoun
Gilsum
New Hampshire

A Sun Valley Idol Ages

Dear Editor:

In regard to Sun Valley's legendary instructor, Lou Witcher, I talked with Lou recently and apparently he is on oxygen these days and is being hospitalized on occasion. None of us who have ever seen Lou on the slope can forget his grace and form.

Libby Fitzgerald
Norwich, Vermont

A Swiss Ambassador to American Skiing

Dear Editor:

I am an old friend of Martin Fopp, the winner of the 1942 U.S. national downhill, nephew of Lieni Fopp, the hotelier who financed the world's first overhead cable lift at Davos, built by Ernest Constam in 1934—a J-bar, upgraded to a T-bar two winters later. Last April, Martin came by and I was able to show him the story in *Skiing Heritage* on the Davos lift. He was very pleased. He is now 86. He and his wife Shirley taught in the U.S. for many years. He was at Davos first, came to Sugar Bowl, under Hannes Schroll, then to Timberline, Alta, Big Bromley, and Jackson. He and I taught together at the Annie Wright School in Tacoma, where we ran a Ski Safari program to the top areas in the Northwest. He is in good spirits and still skiing.

Rich Nelson
Swan Valley, Montana

New Addition to the Beekley Collection

Dear Editor:

It is rumored that I.S.H.A. President Mason Beekley has acquired a large, very nontraditional addition to the Beekley Collection of International Skiing Art at the SkiAerie in New Hartford. True or false?

Allen Adler
Barton, Vermont



Yes, indeed; the new piece is Hot Dog by Ricky Bernstein, seen on the current Heritage wrap cover. It measures 62 inches high by 82 wide, weighs in at 200 pounds, was finished in 1997: painted glass and aluminum, oil, and acrylic paints, color pencil, mixed media objects. Shipping the work from its Aspen gallery was a major project. The artist himself assembled it at SkiAerie. It is an image appropriate to an issue carrying Part II of The Roots of Freestyle—ed

Hail and Farewell to Good Old Schimmerldorf!

Dear Editor:

Forty, yes, 40 years ago, I edited the Amateur Ski Club of New York newsletter. One winter when an injured knee put me out for the season, I wrote a plaintive note to all the members, asking for letters on their skiing adventures. *Nada!*

In quiet desperation, I conjured up Schimmerldorf and Ann C. Compton, a ghost ASCNY member writing about it.

Anne's "Schimmerldorf" follows:

A Trip to Schimmerldorf

After an easy motor trip from Zurich, Charles and I found ourselves entering the incomparable resort of Schimmerldorf. A beautiful village has been created integral with a quaint old peasant hamlet so that skiers may enjoy the vast snow fields of the Schimmerlalp.

The hotel offers the best in comfort without sacrificing taste or character. No Motel Modern here. Food of the first class and decidedly French is served in the dining room. Fresh flowers and bowls of hot-house fruits appeared in our rooms daily. Ski boots left outside the door at night were bone dry and polished by morning. All services were performed flawlessly and unobtrusively.

The three little restaurants in town and the patisserie are models of their kind. (We never saw a single Wiener schnitzel, thank goodness.) Bargain prices prevail everywhere one looks, for skis or outfitts.

Fresh fluffy powder fell every night. There are helicopter flights to nearby Piz Anna which include a lunch stop for a superb fraises des bois, paupiette de veau in wine and cream sauce, with Doboschtorfe for dessert. After that, some of the world's finest powder skiing, and all for the price of a day ticket.

When we left, a bottle of Veuve Cliquot stood iced and ready in our room to ease the pangs of parting. Too many skiers will discover this resort too soon—Anne C. Compton

A hornet's nest of letters arrived from ASCNY members and phone calls from places like Zurich and Vienna, all clamoring to know where Schimmerldorf was. So I was obliged to buy the village in a handy avalanche in the next newsletter.

A year after I had entered Schimmerldorf, I missed rhapsodizing about a perfect place, and so created another, "High Hoodoo" in Three Corners Snow Bowl, Idaho, or maybe Colorado.

There ensued another round of calls from club members skiing at Grand Targhee and other Western preserves; I advised them as best I could, saying that I had heard good things about the Pronghorn Motel on West Main and Basalt in Hoodoo, and that the Dolly Varden served squirrel hash and home-fries of divine

nature. Most questions, I simply referred to Anne C. Compton, the author of another account of a new fabulous resort.

David Binger
Plainfield
New Hampshire

A Wiard Party

Dear Editor:

My husband and I are members of I.S.H.A. and have a collection of antique skis, bindings, and poles. This February, we invited friends to join us for a day of skiing on an-

Bring Your Sweetheart



THE SATURDAY EVENING POST



ique equipment from the 1900-1925 era. The front page of the invitation had an old-fashioned picture of two infants on skis and a Saturday Evening Post cover on the back.

Barbara Wiard
Salida, California

Clif Taylor Speaks

Dear Editor:

Have you noticed that parabolic skis are being recommended two to four inches (five to ten centimeters) shorter than standard skis? They carve better, certainly, but they are also easier to turn—they are shorter.

This idea goes back to 1960, when I invented Graduated Length Method, using three-, four-, and five-foot skis to bring novices through the initial stages, eventually putting them on a six-foot ski.

The sport badly needs new skiers. If short ski programs were introduced again, it would boost the numbers staying with the sport, just as it did in the 1960s. What's wrong with making learning to ski easy?

Clif Taylor
Copper Mountain
Colorado

What About Ludic?

Dear Editor:

In the last issue's Roots of Freestyle, Heritage introduced me to a new word: "ludic." It's not known to the Random House dictionary, either. Sounds like a nice word, but a lot of people won't know it, I suspect.

David Rowan
Woodbury
Connecticut

One source was John Allen's scholarly *Skisport to Skiing* (1993) in which Chapter Three is entitled Utilitarian Skiing and Ludic Euthusiasms. The inquiry sent the editor to his trusty "magnifying glass" Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the philosophical bible—inexplicably, it failed to show the word.

So, over to John Allen, who reported as follows:

"The sports history world really takes its cue from Jan Huizinga, whose Homo Ludens investigated the history of 'playful man' as opposed to religious man or philosophical man. Ludic means playful. Huizinga's book marks the beginning of serious study of sports history. There were a few articles and books before then, of course. No wonder your OED didn't have it; the 'magnifying glass edition' dates to around 1903, well before Homo Ludens. (By the way, the book is a wonderful read.)"

The editor's second source was the much-revered (in The Sixties) Hermann Hesse, whose *The Glass Bead Game*, published in 1927, had a guru called Magister Ludi, "Master of the Game." Back then, of course, anything esoteric was cool—ed

READERS RESPONSE continued

The Adventures of Wolfe

Dear Editor:

Skiing Heritage's first five years of publication makes it plain how close-knit the early ski community really was in the



Wolfe, consummate continental

1930s and 1940s. More than a community, it was a fraternity. Everyone who skied knew most of the skiers in their region and all had the same common pantheon of pioneers—which included Friedl Pfeifer, Otto Lang, Emile Allais and Hannes Schneider.

The fraternal feeling of early skiing was brought home by Irv Pratt's letter on the history of the *Ancient Skiers of Paradise* (now *Ancient Skiers*) of which I was one, having been introduced to the snows of Mt. Rainier by Ben Thompson in the summer of 1933. My parents had taken a summer vacation at Paradise Lodge and were surprised that there was still snow on the upper mountain. Ben was chief climbing guide for the U.S. Park Service on Rainier; he took me on a number of ski trips, one all the way up to Camp Muir.

After Ben became a partner in Seattle's pioneer ski equipment supplier, Anderson and Thompson (the former was a furniture manufacturer), the company made the first laminated skis in the Far West. One of the A&T employees became a special friend: Wendell (Windy) Trosper. Windy among other things assembled the first steel pole

made in the U.S. (and, for all I know, the world). It was designed by Otto Lang, founder of the first three official Arlberg schools west of the Mississippi—on Mt. Rainier, Mt. Baker and Mt. Hood.

In 1934, I went back to Mt. Rainier as an apprentice guide—my high school summer job. Windy was my buddy. Before the summer was over, he and I climbed the northeast face of Pinnacle Peak. In the winter, Windy was one of those taking part in Mt. Rainier's Silver Skis downhill from Camp Muir to Paradise Lodge.

I assiduously avoided this particular race because the early Silver Skis were a scramble for survival. There was no course preparation. The snow turned from ice to mush at the lower levels and took a terrible toll on the racers in the course of the 4,000-foot vertical drop. But the riskiest part was the *geschnozzle* start. Some 60 skiers took off side-by-side in a monstrous mêlée, so brutal that one of my friends, less cautious than I, entered the race and woke up a few seconds after the start lying on the snow with several of his teeth scattered around his head.

Obviously you are by now wondering how I got into the ski picture so early; let me make a short digression (though the ability to keep it short is a talent my friends accuse me of lacking): I was born in the uplands of northern Germany but my Austrian parents soon had me dotting the slopes of the Silesian Riesengebirge, the Austrian Arlberg, and various Swiss alps with tiny sitmarks.

My family emigrated to Los Angeles in 1932 and I was soon deploying my

Guiding with Windy Trosper 1934



Ascending Paradise Glacier 1933

inimitable *Ruecklage*—backward-lean—technique, on the snows of the Sierra. My first glimpse of snowfields above a California orange grove set me off on a search. Soon any number of virgin San Gabriel slopes were punctuated by my dot-and-dash signature track.

Walter Mosauer, the redoubtable ski pioneer, took me on my first trips to the Sierra Nevada and we often skied then-littless territory, like Mammoth Mountain, that today are national destination resorts.

Thereafter, I connected with the UCLA ski team, at first as a mascot, then as an undergraduate racer. The transition involved a grueling reformation of my beloved backward-lean, *Ruecklage*, into a forward-lean, or *Vortage*. Not that I lacked for instruction: Otto Steiner at Mt. Baldy, Hannes Schroll in Yosemite, and Friedl Pfeifer at Sun Valley. My amateur sitmarks were replaced by more professional-looking header-holes.

Then World War II imported me into the U.S. Army, and exported me to the federal government which much needed my native talent for reading and writing German. I spent a year in the Office of War Information (an offshoot of the OSS) in New York City during which time my skiing was confined to a few trips to the Berkshires, Stowe and Mt. Tremblant. The Sierra it wasn't.

The war over, I soon beelined for San

Francisco, in 1946. Then I wandered into the offices of a two-year-old publication, *Western Skiing* and emerged a few hours later, having been hired and elevated to the dizzying bureaucratic height of Managing Editor, which involved writing articles, editing articles, and laying out pages.

Then *Western Skiing* was absorbed by *Ski*, and I became *Ski's* Western Editor and that involved additional duties: taking pictures, selling ads and sweeping out the office—but I soon realized how much more reasonable a life I could have selling goods rather than words and became a partner in Hagemeister-Lert, importing cutting-edge skiwear and equipment.

Some 40 years spent doing that was followed by my recent retrenchment. I now rule over a small San Francisco office (sharing a secretary) where, among other endeavors, I strive to place on the historical record some of the aspects of the sport that have meant a good deal to me that would otherwise surely be forgotten.

Wolfgang Lert
San Francisco

Wolfie is Skiing Heritage's defacto Far Western Editor, having contributed five articles on Californians Otto Steiner and Hans Hagenmeister in past issues; his letters to the editor, filled with sage advice and assorted crotchets, have consistently illuminated the Response pages.

Wolfie is currently deploying his recall of the California ski scene in the 1930s and 1940s to prepare future stories on two early California skiers, Bill Klein and Walter Mosauer.

Yet even Wolfie's memory can falter on occasion. Admittedly an accomplished racer in the 1930s, Wolfie continues to insist that he once took the measure of four-event champion Wayne Poulsen of Reno in a slalom race. This has a somewhat dubious ring to it, but Wolfie says he can come up with proof—ed

Wolfie (below, right) tries to persuade the editor (a vain attempt to sell a wild spin) that he, Wolfie, once beat four-way champion Wayne Poulsen in a slalom



Correction On Sapporo

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed your article looking back to the Sapporo 1972 Olympics. For one thing, I was FIS Technical Delegate for Ski Jumping at the 1972 Olympics to oversee the preparation for the jumping events as well as their execution.

When I first arrived in Japan in 1968 during an international ski jumping competition to check on the level of the Japanese preparation for ski jumping, I was alarmed by the lack of proper hill preparation, as well as the Japanese officials' disregard for the safety of the jumpers. However, during the following years the Japanese jumping officials made enormous progress and gave full attention to building the most modern jumping hills in the world at the time, and training their officials to equal the best.

They sent their top ski jumping officials to Europe to the 1968 Olympics and the 1970 World Championships where they took numerous pictures and made endless notes. The final product was outstanding. They did a wonderful job organizing the jumping events. They did as well training their athletes who finished 1,2,3 in the 70-meter competition.

Your article has a small error, however, on page 15, halfway down the left column it states, "It took Japan until Nagano in 1998 to win another individual Olympic medal although they did win the team jumping at Lillehammer."

Actually the Japanese did not win the team title at Lillehammer, Germany did. Who can forget the drama when the best Japanese jumper, Harada, missed so badly on his final try that Germany passed Japan to win. And the even more dramatic moment when Harada was shown over world television on the outrun after his poorly executed jump, exhibiting an extreme dismay at having failed to lead his team to the title he hoped to claim for Japan and the Emperor.

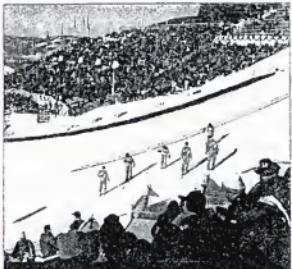
Gus Raam
Mercer Island
Washington

Actually, that was an insertion into Anran's story by the editor, who thought that, having been there in person at the event in Lillehammer, he remembered the results perfectly; so much for being on the scene.

A short note on modern Olympics: attending Lillehammer with the editor was I.S.H.A. President Mason Beekley, who took

the picture of the Norwegian maintenance crew shown below fixing the outrun between jumps. The crew members all wore five-foot skis to help them maneuver smartly, something that would have gladdened the heart of Cliff Taylor had he been there. (See Cliff's letter on the page opposite.)

The two of us had tickets to seats at the team jumping which gave us a nice view of the landing—but not the whole jump. When we left, we were trying to get back to the lodge quickly to watch television, the only way to see what really happened; this desire was tied to a great worry that the transportation system would glitch on us as it had the day before, when we were unable to find any buses scheduled to run to the vicinity of our lodge. In desperation, we thumbed a ride



with a Norwegian Army jeep which took us to where the lodge limo could pick us up.

These Olympics consisted of a few fine spectacles interlaced with too many bad seat days; we were not the only spectators to conclude that a modern Olympics is designed to accommodate VIPs and major news media, plying them with luxury transport and seats with an impeccable view; ordinary mortals have to view events from odd angles and shift for themselves when it comes to getting back to their lodgings—ed

Looking for 10th Mt. Tapes

Dear Editor:

I spent the winter of 1948 ski-bumming in Aspen. Floating around town were a number of audio tapes of the 10th Mountain Division Glee Club. The tapes weren't so great but the songs and the singing were the best! I have always been sorry I didn't get a duplicate made. If any Heritage readers know where these tapes might be available, I am sure many of us would be interested.

Roger Dickensen
Stonington
Connecticut

EDITORIAL

Errare Humanum Est

The question of dealing with error has permeated the field of history, and journalism for centuries. Back when Latin was taught in public high school, the editor was given time to ponder the Latin dicta *Errare humanum est*.

To err is human takes on a certain philosophical weight if only because Roman thinkers had six or seven centuries to work out an understanding of the human condition. One of the more prominent themes was that it is not realistic to insist on perfection. No one knows better than the editor how much care is needed to become reasonably accurate in presenting ski history. His own errors are uncovered and pointed out to him by the editorial board in advance of publication of every issue.

This is germane to I.S.H.A. and this journal because both deal with newly published books on ski history. This is an underpaid field, by definition, since there are relatively few skiers, let alone the general public, interested in ski history. This leaves the field generally speaking, to those who do not expect much in the way of profit for their labors. Most ski histories are labors of love.

Necessarily, then, much ski writing of historical nature is done by writers not terribly well-trained in the niceties of getting things straight on paper. There are procedures such as fact-checking and peer review which can root out most of the error even though, inevitably, some will remain. But, in addition, many honest and aspiring ski history authors simply lack depth of technical knowledge and, equally often, of the general outline of past events in the sport. The net result is, unfortunately, that a high percentage—say 95 percent—of all books dealing with ski history are seriously flawed in fact or in overall approach or both.

At least two books recently published or about to be published have cited nonexistent championships as part of the hero's resume. In other books, certain ski lifts have been confidently stated to be the first of their kind but in historical fact turn out to be the sixth or seventh of their kind. These are the mild examples. There are others more serious. One of the worst recurrent errors comes when authors' naive judgment passed on whole eras or movements reduce them to parodies of their real historical meaning.

This unsatisfactory state of affairs has become more and more apparent to the *Skiing Heritage* editorial board in the six years since I.S.H.A. was founded. One of the goals of I.S.H.A. therefore has gradually become to make writing ski history easier for all those in the field, to make authentic research sources readily available to all those who would write about it, journalists or not.

I.S.H.A. has been taking concrete steps toward this goal. The editorial board, and some of the knowledgeable members of I.S.H.A., are presenting themselves as a "peer review board" for writers undergoing the throes of creating ski historical books. Qualified members of I.S.H.A., including the editor, are available to authors for consultation at the manuscript stage. Several authors currently working on manuscripts have already made use of the generous time offered by Allen Adler, whose *New England and Thereabouts—a Ski Tracing*, is a considerable resource.

For another, Kirby Gilbert has deployed his expertise in Northwest ski history to help writers in that area. Nick Howe has given invaluable advice on ski competition and ski history in general.

In addition, there are a few model works, notably John Allen's

From Skisport to Skiing, which can be pointed out to the potential authors of ski history as reliable sources. As a corollary step, I.S.H.A.'s president Mason Beeley has opened his extensive private collection of ski literature to those qualifying as serious researchers in the field.

Another step forward will be the recording of a detailed outline of the way the sport grew in America, an outline Heritage has been slowly building up through its articles. Good examples are *The Coming of Charlie Lord* (Fall 1994), *Otto Schneids* (Fall 1996) *A Short History of Alpine Skiing* (Winter 1996), *Skiing Comes to Aspen* (Spring 1997), *A History of the Ski Hall of Fame* (Summer 1997), and *The Roots of an Olympic Sport: Freestyle* which continues in this issue.

The next step toward the goal will be a set of several thousand authenticated dates and a reference system to be put on the coming I.S.H.A. website on the internet. And in the future, there will be a database of historical subjects to make research over the Internet relatively simple.

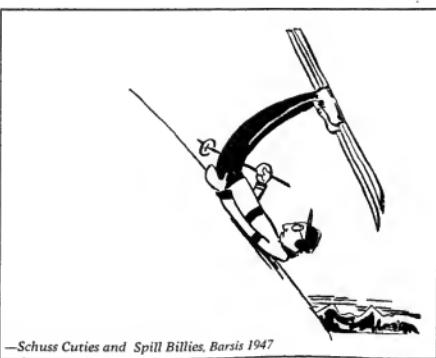
These last two important steps are still unrealized and, in recognition of that, in order to deal fairly with the situation as it exists, I.S.H.A. is following a three-pronged approach: The first is to encourage authors by reviewing books in Bookshelf and Response so as to recognize the author's contribution to the ski historical record at the same time pointing out the errors without being judgmental about it.

Second is the decision to consider a substantial work in the running for one of I.S.H.A.'s annual Ulfr or Skade awards even though flawed by error.

The third is to make occasional Opportunity Grants to authors in need of support willing and able to take guidance from those I.S.H.A. members who can bring their knowledge to bear on the work. I.S.H.A. has engaged its Executive Committee in reviewing, consulting, and recommending authors for these grants.

I.S.H.A. is shaping itself as a resource to aid and abet better and more accurate ski history in the future.

—Morten Lund



Forgotten Photographer

Helene Fischer

...she loved to shoot women



Helene Fischer flashed like a comet across the ski scene in the late 1930s and early 1940s, leaving behind a collection of fine ski photography in her *Skiing East and West*, published in 1946. It is a fine record of the American ski world in transition to the almost exclusively alpine sport today, shoving aside touring and jumping forms that had held sway. At right, Helen focuses on Canada's Olympic team twins Rhoda and Rhona Wurtele.

Helene Fischer *continued*

...she loved to shoot handsome men, too



Hannes Schneider (above) was rescued from Nazi Germany in 1939 to head the ski school at Mt. Cranmore, New Hampshire; George Watson, honorary Mayor of Alta, brought skiing to the Little Cottonwood Canyon by donating his mining claims to the Salt Lake City company that built Alta's first chairlift in 1938.



1943 Was a Very Bad Year

Fischer's camera catches an anomaly in ski history in 1943: Fred Iselin and Sig Buchmayr are seen leading pupils past Snow Valley lodge near Manchester, Vermont. Because World War II had closed Sun Valley, Fred, his wife Elli, and ski school director Otto Lang moved to Snow Valley, along with Sig Buchmayr, whose school at Peckett's Inn, New Hampshire, had shut down in 1939. Unfortunately, Snow Valley, financed by Jewish investors, was engaged in a public feud with outspoken Fred Pabst of Bromley. The atmospherics got so bad that Lang and the Iselins refused to return the next season. Snow Valley closed in the 1970s.

...she documented the rigors of the new downhill skiing



Marks of the 1940s switch to alpine skiing documented by Fischer: the necessary lift blanket on the Stowe single chair; kick-turn practice to cope when obdurate equipment and imperfectly learned Arlberg technique leaves the skier facing the trees at trail's edge; finally, the entrance into alpine skiing of ski jumping heroes of the 1930s making successful and even sensational transitions to the art of downhill, exemplified below by Alta's Sverre Engen conquering the eastern snow at Stowe.



Ski guru James Laughlin praises Fischer's Skiing East and West:

I had known for several years that my friend Helene Fischer took very handsome photographs, but until this book was laid before me I did not realize in what measure her effort, so gracefully and discreetly practiced as an avocation, could justly have claimed for it in terms of art. Now "art" is a word generously bandied about.... For myself, I touch it very rarely and with a good deal of reverence. The photographs of Weston and Walker Evans are art, but the greater part of those we see in fashion magazines are not. The difference is difficult to define, but it goes beyond the mere handling of the instrument to an inner sense of form in its relation to material.

Shall we not say then that Helene Fischer is able to recreate in her pictures the "feel" and the *meaning* of skiing because she is three persons—first, a thorough and also an imaginative technician; then a genuine skier and mountaineer, one who was not born in the shadow of the real Alps for nothing; and, most important of all, one of those subtly alienated observers who can live both inside and outside the phenomena they record. It is not a question of being able to see the "beautiful" in a ski scene and then push the button. Still less is it, with her, a matter of being at the right place at the right time with the right people. There is no sport snobbery in this book. What *is* in this book—beyond the direct recording of where most Americans ski and how they go about it—is a quality which calls to my mind the word coined by the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins—*inscape!* Whatever *inscape* ultimately meant to Hopkins, and the scholars are still arguing happily about it, for me it means, as I turn these pages so richly



continued on the next page

Helene Fischer continued

Praise for Skiing East and West (cont.)

redolent of many winters' enjoyment, the essence of that wonderful experience in which the skier truly fuses his self in the winter world of snow and sun and speed. Only those who have never had the good fortune to have this experience will laugh at me when I say that it partakes of the nature of the religious experience of mysticism. In the vicious money-&machine crazed world in which we live, it is seldom granted to us pulverized humans to come into direct physical relationship with our rapidly-vanishing natural earth. But the snow can cover a lot of ugliness, and some mountains are still safely removed from city taints. A run down fresh snow on a wild mountain slope is perhaps as close as many of us will ever come to sensing ourselves part of the happy old natural life that must have existed before "progress" got out of hand and went berserk. Helene Fischer, with her photographs, talks about these feelings and these values.

Now when I talk about them I come perilously close to the cliff-edge of sentimentality. How much cleaner, how much purer is her picture art! Nature here is not the Hollywood variety, nor even the kind which makes a Swiss calendar look good enough to eat. It is our crisp, hard American nature, so distinctively our own, be it East or West. The pictures tell their story. There is no need to interpret them or clutter them up with adjectives. For skiers they will be a constant renewal of remembered or anticipated pleasures. For non-skiers they will be as good an explanation as could be found of the reasons why, within a little less than two decades, skiing in America has developed from a curiosity to a great national movement which promises to change materially something so basic as the way our people feel about winter—the season that was once the least loved of the year, but is now, for many of us, one whole good reason for living.



*F*ischer captured the relaxed and spacious feel of alpine skiing in the 1930s and 1940s in pictures such as these, showing a lazy curve of rope suspended between skiers on the East's first tow at Woodstock, Vermont; a woman admiring the sweep of the New Hampshire mountains from the upper tram platform and a pristine scene at the very top at Cannon Mountain; such scenes typically lay a short walk away from the top of any lift anywhere.



photos from *Skiing East and West*, in the Berkley International Collection of Skiing Literature

Roots of an Olympic sport: freestyle

Part II Freestyle Comes of Age

A Heritage Special

The rise of freestyle is an astounding story; in one generation, trick skiing went from an amusement to a two-event Olympic sport by means of an era's newly emerging resources—French avalement, Austrian wedel, the Ski Dek, the short ski boom, GLM, the new huge mogul fields, the Ski Masters program—all roots of this brand new world-wide sport.



Peter Miller



Lost in space: freestyle aerobics at Vall in 1972

Part II: freestyle comes of age

by Morten Lund and Peter Miller

There has always been an interesting split in the spirit with which skiers take their sport. There is, on the one hand, a serious, self-discipline side to participation, the certainty that the sport tempers the character and instills the right stuff. By 1930, this approach had produced in the U.S. nationwide nordic disciplines of jumping and cross country, as well as the alpine disciplines of downhill and slalom.

Alternatively, there is the ludic or playful approach to the sport, giving rise to hedonism and high jinks, a side of skiing that takes no thought for the good it does other than please, humor and make merry the skier. This side brought about the skiing which became known as freestyle.

In the beginning, it had no name at all. It was sometimes called "trick skiing." And tricks in skiing are not a recent invention. They are a tradition that goes back at least a century. They go right back to the beginning of ski jumping in the Midwest during the late 1800s, and to the very first jumper of note in the U.S., Mikkel Hemmestveit.

Mikkel immigrated to the Midwest from Norway in 1886, part of the million-man Norse exodus. He had just won his second combined championship in a row at Norway's Huseby meet, the fore-runner of the national Holmenkollen championship meet.

Mikkel naturally became the winner of the first U.S. jumping competition on record, held at St. Paul, Minnesota in 1887. The very sight of this Norwegian champion soaring 60 feet was enough to get the sport of skiing started in the Midwest: he directly inspired the Midwest's late 1800s ski jumping culture, which soon had outlying stations—ski jumps in the Appalachians, the Rockies and the Sierra. Thus was formed the first nationally-organized, self-improving, disciplined skiing in the U.S.

The Fun Side

More to the point is the less formal kind of jumping that appeared unbidden almost as soon as rules for jumping became established and the first ski clubs came along in the Midwest. Two years after Mikkel Hemmestveit showed up on these shores, his brother Torjus immigrated. Torjus had also twice been combined Huseby winner and had been the Norwegian champion in his turn. (He is shown in the picture above, an illustration from an 1893 cover of *Leslie's Weekly*, a popular journal.) Soon after Torjus' arrival, he and Mikkel went off the jump in their home town of Red Wing, Minnesota, holding hands, if you please.

Then, as has happened repeatedly since, the authorities tried to



Torjus Hemmestveit, Norway's champion, in the U.S.

put a brake on this sort of thing. And, as usual, authority had little success. By 1909, trick jumping had become so prevalent that Axel Holter, Secretary of the National Ski Association (founded in 1905 to regulate jumping), had had enough. As John Allen records in his *From Skisport to Skiing*, Holter in that year delivered a sharply-worded message in *Skisport*, the NSA journal. "Where did anyone ever hear of tricks done on skis?" demanded Holter. "Acrobatic performances do not belong in the skisport and should not be encouraged."

The Persistence of Tricks

Alas for the establishment, trick skiing stayed alive and well. There are enough instances in the early records to prove that. To pick two: John Rudd was recorded doing somersaults in Duluth in 1905; Axel Hendrickson put on somersault demonstrations in the Midwest around 1910. On and on.

Conclusion: it is no good trying to ban trick skiing. History shows that it is hydra-headed. Lop off one head, two more appear. Instances of tricks along the roadway of history include the February 1920 *National Geographic* with a picture of Dartmouth undergrad Johnny Carleton in a somersault. And as soon as alpine skiing arrived in the U.S., tricks showed up there. In 1937, a U.S. Olympic

additional research contributed by
Doug Pfeiffer,
Jean Luce, John Hitchcock

Freestyle continued



Roger Brown filming Hermann Goellner's backflip

figure skater, Jimmy Madden, started a trick skiing craze using five-foot double-enders made to his design by Derby-Ball of Waterbury, Vermont, known as "goon skis."

In 1958, at Snow Summit, California, ski school director Doug Pfeiffer came out with a how-to-ski book which allotted a whole chapter to trick skiing.

Then, in the 1960s came a decided change. Trick skiing became a substantial and continuing phenomenon rather than an occasional and peripheral one. The earliest sign came in the form of a small, lithe Swiss ski racer named Art Furrer, who arrived in 1962 as an ordinary instructor. He then proceeded to carve out the first professional career in freestyle, inventing the first repertory of alpine tricks. Then, three years later, in 1965, Austrian-born Hermann Goellner, junior team race coach at Killington, Vermont, paired up with U.S.-born Tom Leroy to do side-by-side flips off handbuilt snow jumps at Killington. These were not just little flips, they were big, high, long flips. The two soon built their spectacular show into serious crowd-attracting, money-making performances, complete with the sponsorship of national ski and boot brands.

After that, a turn of fortune combined these three pioneer

performers—Furrer, Goellner and Leroy—in a single potent force. The force was the film-making of two young Coloradans, Roger Brown and Barry Corbet, working as Summit Films. *The Incredible Skis* shot, edited and produced in 1967 by these two for Hart Ski Company was a startling departure in ski movies.

The Summit Saga

Hart was then Head Ski Company's only rival in the manufacture of aluminum skis, which were challenging wood and plastic skis for the hearts and minds of the skiers. Brown and Corbet persuaded Hart to promote their product in a novel way by making "acrobatic skiing," as interpreted by Summit Films, into their major public relations vehicle. The pioneering work of Corbet and Brown is engraved in the history of freestyle. Their films found ways of expressing freestyle's ultimate capacity for beauty, achievement and adventure. The Brown-Corbet team managed it in the first instance by means of a simple concept: pull the leading trick-and stunt skiers together in a single film to provide that critical mass needed to set off a rousing audience reaction and, incidentally, the succeeding freestyle movement.

The Incredible Skis was a stunning visual fugue: aerial acrobatics in tantalizing slow motion were intercut with on-snow tricks performed by the members of "the Hart Demonstration Team." Furrer, Goellner, and Leroy were joined on film by Swiss Olympic Giant Slalom Champion Roger Staub and U.S. Team downhillier Suzy Chaffee. A little later, Corky Fowler, a Seattle skier with lightning reactions, joined the team. What these skiers did on film was then called "acrobatic skiing," soon to be known as *freestyle ballet*. (It is known today, less felicitously, as "acroski" in FIS competitions.) Furrer led the Hart skiers in the ballet routines; Goellner and Leroy took care of the aerials.

The Summit's film sequences typically joined several tricks in quick succession, mixing aerials and comedy turns with inspired nonsense stunts, all lovingly magnified by the inspired imagination of Corbet whose editing genius transformed the on-slope acrobats into scintillating snow dancers and the aerialists into free-floating objects tumbling lazily through the azure sky in graceful, consecutive arcs like snow-going dolphins. It was fascinating, impossible,

Brown and Corbet filming the Hart Demonstration Team at Vail in 1967



Herman Goellner and Tom Leroy do side by side flips for the Summit Films camera



Freestyle continued



A Summit Films moment: Art Furrer undershoots Chaffee

hallucinogenic. A trip.

In 1968, Summit turned out a second equally successful freestyle film, *Ski the Outer Limits*. That was followed in 1969 by *Moebius Flip*, in which Goellner founded modern freestyle aerials with a combination somersault-full gainer still known as the Moebius Flip. In this film, Corbet introduced the "accordion strobe," multiple images of the same skier unfolded from a single image; these multiples chased each other across the screen in the different primary colors and then folded like a peacock tail back into a single image. It was a spectacular effect.

The first three Summit films boosted the early stage of freestyle into a limelight from which it never departed. Hundreds of Summit films were distributed by Hart to ski communities and clubs, igniting the desire of kids across the country to do tricks rather than race through the gates. There followed a nationwide movement into freestyle. But it was a spread-out, grass-roots phenomenon. The rest of the ski world took another two to three seasons after *Moebius Flip* to recognize the deep appeal of freestyle to the new crop of youngsters just getting on skis.

Giving Music to Freestyle Ballet

The work of the Summit Films performers was purely acrobatic and was set to music afterward on film. But a new influence began to take shape simultaneously with Summit's work which introduced music and rhythm to the original performance.

Phil Gerard was a many-talented Broadway dancer-choreographer, a figure-skater in New York City's Roxy Theater ice revue, and an avid skier. He got into the ski business via Jimmy Hammerstein, son of Broadway musical lyricist Oscar. In 1960, Hammerstein had bought Hunter Mountain, halfway between Albany and New York. Phil Gerard invested, too, and became Hunter's public relations man. Hunter went into bankruptcy in 1963 but Gerard, a notably incurable entrepreneur, soon had fastened onto

his next project, involving the Ski Dek.

The Dek had been invented in 1960 as a way to teach skiing indoors by Ray Hall, a New Jersey skier and mechanical engineer. The Dek, an endless inclined nylon carpet running between two rollers, made use of the fundamental fact of physics that motion is relative; skiers visibly skidding down the carpet nevertheless remained roughly at a fixed point in the surrounding space, just as a jogging machine permits running without moving ahead.

Accumulating Ski Deks

Gerard bought a number of Ski Deks in 1963 and used them eventually to establish *The Phil Gerard Ski World Magic Moving Mountain*, which he set up in 1965 in the sunny precincts of Encino, just off Ventura Boulevard, Los Angeles. Heavy traffic whizzing past just 12 feet away did not prevent Gerard from selling \$5 ski lessons and doing \$2,000 a week in lessons all winter.

But there weren't many takers in the hot months, so Gerard had the Dek to himself and naturally started doing sequences to music. "I found I could do the Roxy routines on skis. I knew then," said Gerard, "that the Dek could be to fancy skiing what artificial ice is to figure skating."

Gerard soon had dance pupils. A college freshman, a ski racer from Northwoods Prep, Lake Placid, New York, John Clendenin, came by and insisted on skiing the Dek. Typically, Gerard set up a deal in which Clendenin spray-painted the entire Dek and in return Gerard taught Clendenin dance routines. Clendenin was joined by Johnny Burnett and Wild Bill O'Leary, performing as a Gerard-choreographed ensemble. While the ensemble twirled on the Dek, Gerard strode about in front, shilling lessons like a sideshow barker. Bigger things were in store.

Soon, the Gerard ensemble made it big time, going onto the Andy Williams 1966 Christmas show on national television to provide the first mass exposure for trick skiing.

And there was more. Harry Leonard, who had been putting on consumer ski shows ever since his pioneer 1958 show in Chicago, in 1966 booked the Gerard ensemble onto his circuit, beginning at the Masonic Auditorium in San Francisco and then going on to Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Detroit and New York, giving freestyle a great deal of additional exposure.

Gerard's fertile imagination envisioned even more spectacular stunts, and he installed a diving board on top of the Dek and, at the cost of innumerable painful shocks landing on the hard surface of the Dek, Clendenin and company enlarged the freestyle repertoire by inventing the tip-drop and

Gerard doing a dance routine



the daffy, among other basics. The Gerard performers picked up on Furrer's trick from Summit films, which were just coming out, and later from Art Furrer himself on the Ski Dek show on the Harry Leonard circuit (also on the circuit: Jean-Claude Killy who had turned pro right after his 1968 Olympic triple gold). And then, Gerard escalated again. He built a fixed slide next to the Dek with a kicker at the bottom. His performers flipped off the end of the fixed slide onto an inflated mat. Enthusiasts flocked to the ski shows to watch the bodies hurling into the mat—a practice long since banned by insurers. Bernie Weichsel, Leonard's assistant, once summarized, "Gerard was crazy, but he was creative."

And he stands as the inventor of the classic ski ballet format: fancy skiing to music.

Ruedi Wyrsch on Tour

At the end of the 1960s, another crucial character came onstage, Art Furrer's protege Ruedi Wyrsch. Having understudied Art at Bolton Valley, Vermont for a year, in 1967 Ruedi became ski school director at Jiminy Peak, Massachusetts. His unique act, juggling plates while skiing on stilts, drew little kids from far and wide; the older kids tried to copy the arabesques Ruedi cut on the slopes.

The same year, Ruedi landed a national sponsor, Old Crow, the whiskey. Ruedi, Roger Staub and Corky Fowler formed the "Old Crow Demo Team" which filled dates coast to coast. Old Crow thus became the first brand outside the ski business to promote freestyle nationally, having its team demonstrate at resorts across the country to show just what was involved in freestyle. After the demonstration, the team showed *Spring to Skiing*, a 20-minute Old Crow freestyle film by Warren Miller to top off the day.

During the 1968 season, Wyrsch moved again, this time to Maine to head the Pleasant Mountain school. His touring duties for Old Crow took him to the other slopes in the state, where he did a good deal to spoil Maine kids for running slalom gates. And here a fruitful connection took place.

At Sugarloaf, Ruedi worked with a very able instructor, Jean Luce, head of the resort's junior program; she was in the process of incubating a "Junior Masters competition." The adult version, Ski Masters, had been designed by North Conway instructor Peter Pinkham as a style contest, an alternative to racing. It was scored with points for proper demonstration of snowplow, stem, and christie. Contestants then had two "free skiing runs" to show they could integrate school turns into a fluid skiing style. But at Sugarloaf, the Masters began to evolve. The kids of Sugarloaf, stoked on Wyrsch's tricks, demanded that they be allowed to do tricks during the free skiing runs. Wisely, Luce permitted the kids do a few stunts per run. At that point, the 1968 Sugarloaf Junior Masters program, which was then a little blip on the screen of the sport, had traveled the first inch toward a national amateur freestyle program.

The Role of the Ski Magazines

The ski magazines were, along with film, the most powerful influences in the early development of freestyle. The two leading periodicals *Ski* and *Skiing* became prime movers in the unparalleled creation of an entire new sport of freestyle within skiing. But it did take awhile. As of 1968, in its entire 33-year existence, *Ski*

had run exactly three articles on trick skiing—the two latest were a 1964 piece on Art Furrer and a 1966 piece on the stunt exhibition by the International Professional Ski Racers Association at Stratton, Vermont which *Ski* had called *A New Kind of Ski Competition*.

Skiing on the other hand, had been founded in 1948 as *Rocky Mountain Skiing* and Doug Pfeiffer had come aboard in 1963 as editor. But, in spite of being a trick skier himself, by the spring of 1968, Doug had not run a piece on trick skiing in any form.

True, there were long-haired skiers in the Rockies doing crazy stuff in the moguls; and, yes, the pro racers had put on "free style" contests. And Stein Eriksen was doing flips wherever he currently worked. Goellner and Leroy were somersaulting at Killington. And there were freestyle runs in the Junior Masters. And Gerard's freestylers put on an interesting act at the ski shows. And *The Incredible Skis* was a great film. But, in the midst of all else that was going on, no editor could justify space for something whose adherents amounted to not much more than a mini-cult.

Still, freestyle was about to get some space, but as pure visual excitement, not as a new kind of ski sport. Up to this point, to give



Ruedi Wyrsch on stilts, juggling at Pleasant Mt., Maine

their pages some graphic punch, ski magazines had relied entirely on powder skiing, terrain jumps and classic pole turns. But now the potential of freestyle was discovered. It began with John Fry, who had been *Ski*'s editor since 1962. In 1967, *Fry and Ski* Associate Publisher Dave Rowan had been mightily impressed by *The Incredible Skis*. The two of them pushed *Ski* into sponsoring the next Summit film, *The Outer Limits*. Having been alerted to freestyle's visual potential, Fry now ran what can be called the first freestyle cover in *Ski*'s September 1968 issue—a skier high in the air doing a kickout, with the sun's rays bursting around him. The caption read, "Sensational leap by Waterville Valley, New Hampshire, ski instructor Martin von Konel was captured in silhouette by Frank Davidson." No mention of a new kind of skiing.

Nevertheless, the cover showed a stunt that was neither a somersault, gelenksprung, nor pole turn. The almost anonymous aerialist demonstrating a configured leap into space was something quite different. But there was still a bit more to come in 1968 on freestyle: in the next month's issue, October 1968, Fry laid out a two-page

Freestyle continued



The first freestyle cover, Ski Magazine, September 1968

illustrated review of *The Outer Limits*, writing, "the film explores the crackling visual outer limits of flips, royal christies, Charleston wiggles and deep powder skiing. Absolutely sensational is an aerial somersault performed by Tom Leroy off a cornice hanging over the almost vertical face of Corbet's Couloir at Jackson Hole. The camera, in ultra slow motion, shows Leroy plummeting, upside down at first, for a hundred feet or more before his skis touch the snow..."

The Junior Masters Starts Growing

During the following winter of 1968-69, the new stirring in 12-and-under skiers manifested itself clearly. Some 50 kids signed up for the Sugarloaf freestyle-enhanced Junior Masters program, tripling the previous enrollment. The Junior Masters was ballooning. And it was happening not only at Sugarloaf but at Pleasant Mt., Saddleback, Squaw, and Sunday River—these resorts banded together as a five-resort Maine circuit competition that winter.

At the same time, the staid, adult Masters program in New Hampshire ran out of steam. Peter Pinkham met with the Maine Junior Masters committee in Portland during January 1969 and graciously merged his original Ski Masters committee with the Maine Junior Masters Committee. The merger resulted in a new entity called the

Eastern Junior Masters Committee—Jean Luce, chairman. In March 1969, the committee ran a statewide Maine Junior Masters Championship. The amateur branch of freestyle was showing potential—all credit to Luce, Wyrsh and Summit. In retrospect, Summit did for freestyle what Hannes Schneider and Arnold Fanck's 1927 *Das Wunder des Schneeschuhls* had done for alpine skiing: defined and glamorized the discipline for those young skiers who were the future of the sport.

That summer, Jean Luce set about drafting definitive scoring rules, studying the U.S. Figure Skating International Rule Book, the FIS ski jumping and alpine manuals. She typed up 26 pages mostly specifying how to score contestants. Taking her handbook to the USEASA's fall 1969 meeting, she got permission to set up a USEASA-sanctioned Junior Masters circuit under those rules. Luce was fast becoming the Mother of Amateur Freestyle, going the first crucial mile along the road to the national recognition of amateur freestyle.

Clean-Cuts Versus Hot Dogs

Before 1969 was over, Doug Pfeiffer began making tentative moves to give freestyle some space. He ran *Skiing*'s first freestyle cover. The December 1969 issue showed Leroy and Goellner in splendid simultaneous flips. In that same issue, Doug reviewed *Moebius Flip*, calling it "A psychedelic treat. A phantasmagoric, optical delight."

Summit Films ski movies were about ballet and aerials, with clean-cut, "bankable" performers doing them. But there was another larger group of skiers in the freestyle mode who were definitely neither clean-cut nor doing aerials and ballet.

These were the "hot dogs," the mogul skiers of the West, skiers consumed by the challenge of skiing spectacularly through the bumps, huge bumps, the kind that blossomed into enormous mogul fields. In a day before grooming machines had the power to flatten big moguls, the hot dogs claimed these fields as their own. They also proudly displayed a decided lack of civic virtue, much long hair and an anti-Vietnam War stance, all attitudes guaranteeing very low media recognition.

In spite of all that, hot dogs were about to climb the ladder to celebrity. In 1969, Bob Burns of Sun Valley became the first hot dog to get national exposure. Burns had a demonstrated genius that raised the art of traveling fast through moguls to such a level of perfection that all he needed was a discoverer. And Burns' discoverer was at hand: Dick Barrymore.

Dick had by then had a successful ski lecture film career for over a decade. After his first lecture film, *Ski West Young Man*, opened in 1960, Dick soon joined the select company of John Jay and Warren Miller. Now Dick caught his first glimpse of Bob Burns coming down a Sun Valley mogul run; as Dick wrote, "It changed my life as a ski film maker. Burns' style was not like any I had seen before. Burns sat back in a permanent toilet-seat position with his hands high over his head, holding 60-inch ski poles. He sent his skis straight over the mogul in front of him and when it looked like he would fall flat on his back, he used his strong body to catch up with the skis. No one skied like Burns. Bob Burns was, in 1969, the

first of the famous 'hot dogs.'"

Burns was a rep for K2 ski company, and so Dick approached Chuck Ferries, a former national team racer now a K2 executive, to finance a short on Burns. Dick then signed on John Clendenin and shot the film that spring on Mammoth Mountain. *Eleven Minutes and 59 Seconds of Skis and Skiers* debuted for the 1969-70 season, in time to inspire the West's hot dogs to new heights. Having had a hard time getting into print, hot dogging was having much more luck getting into film.

Enter Wayne Wong

In the winter of 1970, *Eleven Minutes* had a big impact on a future freestyle great: a mannerly, charming college student with a particularly good sense of balance named Wayne Wong. As the mogul-running good guy, Wayne would help counterweight all those bad-guy hot dogs. An undergrad at Vancouver City College, Wayne was a ski instructor in his spare time who had begun imitating Art Furrer's Summit Films stunts, mastering every one. He got his mogul skiing moves from Burns and Clendenin in *Eleven Minutes*. Wayne began building a fine repertory. "I would try anything—fall down, keep on moving, get back on my skis and invent cool stuff that way," is how Wong explains filling out one of freestyle's best bag of tricks.

Typically, once when he was zipping along, both his tips stuck into an abrupt transition; he jammed his poles in to keep from falling, then let his momentum somersault him over the poles. The Wong Banger had been born.

In March 1970, Doug Pfeiffer published *Skiing's* second freestyle story: four pages of sequences on Ruedi Wyrtsch. (photographed by

Skiing's story on Bob Burns' sitback technique

It's Wild!

It's a Wheelee!

Vancouver's Wayne Wong practicing a *Butterfly Reuel*

Virginia Sturgess, Mrs. Doug Pfeiffer). Ruedi was shown doing a great Javelin turn, a One-sided Split, the Swing Over, the Butterfly Reuel and the Running Cross-Over, among others. The story emphasized an important point: the sport was evolving; at an educated guess, there were some 30 to 40 tricks in freestyle repertory at this juncture.

The winter in which Wayne invented the Wong Banger and Wyrtsch was exposed to the reading public, the Masters circuit was expanding out of Maine to other states: to Waterville Valley and Mt. Cranmore in New Hampshire and resorts in Vermont, Massachusetts and New York. They were all competing under Luce's USEASA-approved rules. USEASA was part of the core ski establishment and, if for no other reason, its involvement was important for the future of freestyle.

Junior Masters at Waterville Valley

The Junior Masters made an impact in another way. One of the newly-joined resorts on the USEASA circuit, Waterville Valley, was about to play a pivotal part in legitimizing freestyle.

At Waterville, the man in charge of the weekend junior program was Bill Polleys, a part-time instructor who was in real life a high-echelon executive at Texas Instruments in Massachusetts. He could organize well and one of his tasks was readying juniors for the new kind of competition, Masters meets.

Early in the 1970 season, Waterville's president, Tom Corcoran—former Olympic racer, fourth in the GS at Squaw in 1960 called Polleys into his office to discuss the organization of the coming Waterville regional Junior Masters meet. Corcoran also called in publicity man Dev Jennings, ski school director Paul Pfose—and Tom's wife Birdie, a competitor in the original Masters. Corcoran had watched Birdie in competition and found the event boring. Tom argued forcefully for shifting emphasis to mogul skiing and aerials and finessing compulsory school turns. "Tom's ideas," recalls Polleys, "were driven by what would look good on TV."

Polleys himself was partial to basic school-turn competition but, in hindsight, he realized, he says, that Tom Corcoran had then and there formulated the modern approach to freestyle competition. Fol-



Freestyle continued

lowing Corcoran's desires, the 1970 Waterville Junior Masters meet was run on moguls. The meet was held on True Grit, the resort's new, steep trail sporting bumps galore. In the moguls, even the compulsory forms became more interesting; free runs over the moguls were great spectator stuff. Corcoran was watching and making mental notes to be put to good effect only a year later when Waterville would run the first national freestyle championship.

Building the Foundation for a Sport

That summer of 1970 amateur freestyle took another step ahead. Polleys attended the USEASA Junior Masters post-season gathering under Jean Luce to push Corcoran's idea of making freestyle the core of things. After a long discussion, the group was won over and renamed itself the USEASA Freestyle Committee. It was the first time any organization used "freestyle" as part of an official title, laying the foundation for amateur freestyle on a national scale—and on an international scale.

Some years down the line, the Europeans would be exposed to freestyle and explain to themselves that this wildly original idea must have issued from the exuberant cowboy nature of the Americans. But much of the development of freestyle took place in the tedious work of this little committee struggling quietly toward a light dimly seen. It wasn't all macho and glory.

By 1970, freestyle had reached a state of squalling and calling for attention, puny and uncertain but definitely growing. New tricks were being passed around among an increasingly larger group of younger skiers at resorts both east and west. From his perch in the editorial seat at *Skiing*, Doug Pfeiffer sensed that "exhibition skiing," as he preferred to call it, was becoming an American folk art like jazz, spontaneously generated.

But Doug had a full plate of deeply engaging developments to deal with. Slope grooming and extensive snowmaking had gone into high gear and beginning to change the face of the sport. New lifts were coming on line all over the country at an unprecedented rate. The short-ski GLM controversy was reaching its peak: ski lengths were dropping.

Plastics and metal had eliminated the role of wood and leather in a proliferation of skis and boots which had to be evaluated for the reader. The new French *avalement* sit-back technique demanded explanation. And the Americans had been in the running for the big international racing prizes ever since Billy Kidd and Jimmy Huega took the silver and bronze in the 1964 Innsbruck Olympic slalom.



Griswold, Stelling, Clendenin, McWilliams, Bauman on tour as the K2 Demo Team in the winter of 1971

There had never been a decade to match the feverish effervescence in the sport of skiing as in the last five years of the 1960s and the first five of the 1970s. In that context, it was hard to give space to freestyle while it was still not up to speed, and fell considerably short of being a national force.

Doug Pfeiffer Makes Some Moves

But Pfeiffer had known all along what was needed, a major brand sponsorship to support: an exhibition meet of national scope; and all along, Pfeiffer had been working on it. His first victory was to nail down a site. In the fall of 1970, he turned up the heat in his campaign to convince Tom Corcoran to hold a major freestyle meet.

Pfeiffer had worked on Corcoran for several years, his persuasion going something like this: "Tom, Olympic racers are good at turning left and right but can they really ski? The best skiers are skiing the back of your mountain where the instructors can't see them violating the technique rules. Why not organize something where these guys can really 'get it on'?"

Courtesy of the Junior Masters, Corcoran had already plumbed the promotional possibilities. And Tom loved a challenge. In the fall of 1970, he sat down with Doug at the Boston Ski Show and agreed to host a national freestyle competition—if *Skiing* could bring in a sponsor with prize money enough to entice the skiers from the West; only that would produce a meet of national dimensions.

Doug enlisted Brad Briggs, a vice president at Ziff-Davis, the ultimate owner of *Skiing*; Doug first persuaded Briggs that freestyle could be a fine promotional vehicle. Then Briggs connected Pfeiffer with John DeLorean, the president of Chevrolet. DeLorean was somewhat of an iconoclast who would eventually write an exposé memorably entitled *On A Clear Day You Can See General Motors*. That being the case, it was not surprising to find DeLorean entranced by the idea of sponsoring something different.

After that, there was a sudden shift in the minds of lower-echelon Chevy executives, the same men who had previously been impervious to Pfeiffer's idea of having Chevy sponsor a big freestyle meet. Quickly, they came up with an offer of a \$6,000 Sting Ray and \$4,000 in cash to spread among the runners-up. Doug began to plan seriously for a big Waterville meet.

In the meantime on the film front, Dick Barrymore had been very active. The success of his 1969 Bob Burns film had led to a second K2 film in 1970 called *Here Come the K2 Skiers*: another hit. Two back-to-back successes bolstered Barrymore's bid to make

a more ambitious film to be shot during a 10,000-mile tour of a "K2 Demo team." The team would spend the 1970-71 winter riding around in a red, white and blue motor home, bringing hot-dogging to resorts across the length and breadth of snow country. The film of the trip, *The Performers*, would become famous.

The fame in part had its origin in a completely unconnected Barrymore promotion before the trip even began. This was a K2-sponsored Airline Week "T-shirt contest" in the Boiler Room at Sun Valley in which stewardesses would compete wearing K2 T-shirts and dancing to music.

The first contestant represented United Airlines and turned out to be a ringer. She bounced onstage wearing only shorts and a T-shirt wrapped around her wrist—a stripper from Denver. The amateur talent, not to be upstaged, drenched their T-shirts before going on. Thus was born the first "K2 Wet T-Shirt Contest." The point was this: when the K2 Demo Team hit Stowe in the middle of a blizzard, Barrymore persuaded Stowe's Rusty Nail to stage a second K2 Wet T-Shirt Contest so he could have something to film. The word got around like lightning. The Stowe City Council held an emergency meeting and passed a total ban on nudity. Then they dispatched a county deputy sheriff with express orders to arrest Barrymore if the contestants showed too much zeal.

The proceedings at the Rusty Nail were raucous but legal—until the last contestant turned her back, whipped off her T-shirt, and turned around holding it up in front, continuing to swing and sway to the music. A few bars from the end, she, oops, accidentally dropped the shirt and Barrymore thought he was as good as incinerated. But the deputy sheriff ambled up in a bit and said, no problem, accidents can happen.

In February, in the middle of Barrymore's tour, an article in *Skiing* on Dick's protégé Bob Burns hit the newsstands and *Skiing* Senior Editor John Auran became the first establishment writer to praise a hot dog. John treated Burns' phenomenal skiing as an inspired improvement on current sit-back technique but the photo sequences of Burns' patented series of "linked recoveries" were mind-boggling. It was hot-dogging pure and simple.

The Waterville meet was scheduled for the first week in March. Pfeiffer had timed the story strategically as a build-up to what he hoped would be an event of great importance in pushing freestyle to the fore in skiing. And getting it on television, always a goal.

But another largely unplanned, unforeseen hot dog meet was destined to come off first, barely a few days earlier.

It took place in Aspen mainly because Dick Barrymore had made some general, vague promises to friends there that as soon as the K2 Demo Team tour hit town, he would sponsor a "hot dog contest." And so the meet spontaneously ballooned forth on the Ridge of Bell Mountain on the first day of March 1971, organized by word-of-mouth, an impromptu and irreverent occasion that called out every hot-dog in town. The only rule was to ski as spectacularly as possible from point A to point B down Bell Mountain.

Prizes were offered for fastest, worst, best and unique—one set of K2 skis for the winner, Bonne Bell cosmetics and free drinks at the award ceremony at the Red Onion for the rest.

It was a wild day. There was fresh snow, warm sun and a deep blue sky. Several thousand spectators lined the course, pulling on jug wine, smoking pot, "getting it on" along with the 89 contestants, a completely free-flowing event.

Anyone who views *The Performers* even today would be impressed at how much alike the technique then is compared to that of the Olympic mogul skiers at Nagano. The reckless speed and bounce-back recoveries ran just on the far side of the believable. Skiing had never been like this. Aspen instructor Sid Erickson won the K2 skis for flying over the moguls fastest. Robert "Boogie" Mann won the uniqueness prize for his maddeningly slow, laid-back hesitation wheelie, the Slow Dog Noodle. Toni Leroy, who watched from the sidelines, recalls, "...it was the greatest, most fun event I've ever watched. It was simply man and mountain... gung-ho excitement and no rules." The enthusiasm was enormous.

An exception to this was Darcy Brown, president of Aspen Skiing Corporation. During the meet he rode the Bell Mountain chair up the Ridge and smelled the strong aroma of marijuana and vowed no hot dog meet would ever again be staged on such a highly visible spot on a ski corporation mountain.

The First National Freestyle Championship

A few days later, a very different meet was held at Waterville, the first National Championship of Exhibition Skiing. It was the Aspen meet's opposite. It had big prize money, it offered travel money, it had a major national brand-name sponsor, it had official status with the resort, and an establishment person behind it—Tom Corcoran. It was so widely advertised that hot dogs came to compete from "out of the woodwork and the woods."



Aspen hot dog mashes moguls at the first K2 meet in 1971

Freestyle continued

The rules specified the best of three runs on True Grit. The course was divided into three sections; first an array of big natural moguls constituting a veritable obstacle course. Second, a set of man-made jumps with a kicker to give contestants a chance to get into the air. (One jump, The Ship's Prow, bounced contestants off to either side.) Last came a smooth final stretch, groomed flat, where contestants showed on-snow tricks, freestyle ballet. The judges, among them Jean-Claude Killy, scored contestants on excitement generated, imaginative use of terrain, and inventiveness.

The event turned out to be everything Pfeiffer dreamed freestyle could be. Some 2,000 spectators showed up even in the teeth of a miserable snow storm. The competitors pulled off moves never seen before by the public—the Polish Donut and the Worm Turn, involving big body contact with the snow. Bob Burns did his hair-raising wheelies; the irrepressible Suzy Chaffee—the only woman entrant—resplendent in red, black and white tights, cut stylish figures on four-foot double-ended skis. Ignoring the negative vocal comment from the sidelines, she came in fourth overall.

Bob Bennett, short in stature and long in skill, arrived from Sun Valley wearing a gigantic Dr. Seuss hat; he sailed into the woods and, everybody assumed, disaster, then flashed out high in the air seventy yards below. Secretly, Bennett had heaped snow on a huge boulder in the woods to make a huge takeoff for a leap into the air.

Finally the big boys: Tom Leroy had told the judges it would be unfair to sanction flips since they were his and Goellner's specialty. But Wayn Wong, who arrived financed by the student body of the Vancouver City College, convinced the judges to allow flips, saying he could beat Leroy anyway. Wong (who did not flip) proceeded to outperform Leroy, bobbing and weaving through the bumps like a cork in a swift current; dazzling spectators with windmill crossovers and 360-degree tip rolls, he sailed high in his jump effort. But Ken Toffer of Okemo beat him to second place with a very high-speed mogul run.

Finally, Hermann Goellner came on strong to win the Sting Ray with a beautifully controlled full-layout back flip, arms steadily extended and ski poles firmly in hand. A Sting Ray! This raised the sights of ten thousand young skiers across the continent.

That meant it was now OK to win money. That novel idea had vast appeal to young skiers. At the turn of the 1970s, the attraction of amateurism, the sport's long-standing anachronism, was rapidly being whittled down.

The dethroning of amateurism had begun back in 1961 when

Friedl Pfeiffer had launched the first professional alpine circuit. It continued when U.S. team coach Bob Beattie, who had led the U.S. team to its first men's Olympic medals, entered an opinion against the straightjacket of amateur rules. Beattie proposed to the USSA that the U.S. racers be allowed to earn above-the-table money from sponsors instead of under-the-table payments. The USSA pronounced itself to be shocked, *shocked*, at the idea of competitors making money from racing; the board of directors turned Beattie down flat. Beattie resigned. He started a pro circuit.

In 1971, even as the first freestyle pro meets were taking place Beattie was producing the second of his two World Pro Skiing events in Europe. The success of Beattie's 1971 World Pro meets in Europe lent sanction to the pioneer pro freestyle meets in America.

More Freestyle Meets

Waterville had been a big success with a huge crowd on the sidelines. Chevy had been impressed and backed Pfeiffer in setting

up a second pro freestyle at Vail, in April, with a Camero as first prize. Pfeiffer picked Stein Eriksen, Roger Staub, Tom Corcoran, Horst Abrams and Steve Sherlock as judges. Two thousand spectators watched Jeff Jobe, who had gained fame as a hang-gliding skier, perform nearly flawless helicopters; they watched Herman Goellner win the aerials with a Moebius flip but—surprise—Goellner was just barely beaten out of the overall win, and by a European at that.

Fuzzi (pronounced *Footsie*) Garhamer had come to Vail for an international ski instructor congress and had entered the Vail freestyle competition on the spur of the moment; he did rubber-legged clown tricks in the moguls. Goellner fell in the event. Out of deference to the Western emphasis on moguls skiing, the mogul run again was weighted so heavily in the scoring that Fuzzi outpointed Goellner to win the Camero.

The first freestyle season was over.

The First Big Story

That fall, Doug Pfeiffer cashed in on all his effort of the previous season by writing *Skiing*'s first feature on freestyle in its September 1971 issue. Doug blissfully entitled it *The Greatest Show on Snow* and filled enough pages to amply cover Waterville and Vail and celebrate the victory. As Doug wrote, "Skiing, as almost everyone knows," has its establishment—the United States Ski Association and its nine divisions. But skiing has its underground...and a spectacle is what the frustrated underground is after."

Doug ticked off the unconventional events of the past season in



Suzy Chaffee competing at the first National Championships at Waterville Valley, 1971

addition to the two freestyle contests which *Skiing* had sponsored. "Witness the deep-snow figure-eight contest at Jackson Hole," wrote Doug. "And the incredible jumping-for-pay events which keep

springing up throughout the country... And witness the two K2 Hot Dog Contests. Dick Barrymore presided over at Aspen and Winter Park. [Dick had staged a second K2 meet.] And witness them you should have, along with thousands ... who howled with laughter, gawked with awe, gasped with surprise as performers skied moguls with cross country skis, leapfrogged bumps, and generally carried on

"K" painted on one breast and a "2" on the other. Deafening cheers.

Patently, freestyle was the epicenter of a cultural earthquake shaking society from stem to stern; the older generation was still holding



Skiing cover December 1971:
Wayne Wong executing a wheelie
March 1971 at Waterville

with minimum pomp and circumstance, maximum skill and hilarity."

"The world's best skiers are no longer necessarily in the ranks of ski racers... [but] the hot dogs... doing tricks in the air that would jolt a blasé aerial artist off his trapeze, and doing feats that would confound a choreographer."

At this point, Doug had joined the decade's activist journalists: in the mid-1960s, ski magazine editors had begun to midwife novel movements which greatly enriched the sport. John Fry had led off in *Ski* with GLM (short skis) and NASTAR (citizen racing). Now Doug had brought about the first hot dog competition.

A battle had been won for hot dogging. But not the war.

There was a social barrier the hot dogs had to surmount.

The Trouble with Hot Dogs

As of its first meets in 1971, hot dog contests were unquestionably a stage for the younger generation's attack on current taboos of the older generation of skiers against unsanctified sex, pot-smoking and war protest. None of this was acceptable. John Fry summarized it succinctly by saying, "No question that hot dogs in the 1970s paralleled the history of snowboarding this decade, finding themselves in a hostile environment."

The revolt against established values was out in the open at the K2 post-race award party at Aspen's Red Onion, where not only the awards but the third K2 T-shirt Contest had been scheduled. Winner Sid Erickson was quickly presented the K2 skis as the audience began chanting for the T-shirt contest to begin. And so it did. Women filling out K2-emblazoned, thoroughly-soaked T-shirts, danced in translucent glory across the floor while Barrymore's second camera shot the whole thing through swirls of pungent smoke. One enterprising contestant wore no T-shirt at all, coming on with a

It was the end of skiing as a sanctuary from the bad things happening in the cities—freestyle was dragging these bad things into a pristine territory heretofore reserved for nobler stuff. Establishment skiers, well-off, raising a family, particularly those with teenagers, a core ski magazine constituency, regarded hot dog

skiers with "fear and loathing."

It was highly reasonable for the ski magazines to handle the hot dog phenomenon gingerly. They were doing a difficult balancing act, implying that, on the one hand, *something big is happening* and, on the other, *not to worry, it's only a few kids*. Following Doug's big story in the September 1971 issue, *Skiing* refrained from further freestyle stories for the rest of the 1971-72 publishing year, even though a second freestyle season was ongoing that winter.

Skiing did run a December 1971 cover of Wayne Wong busting the moguls at the Waterville meet the previous March. The caption read, "Wayne Wong, 20-year-old Canadian from Vancouver, B.C., turns it on during the National Championship of Exhibition Skiing at Waterville Valley, N.H. Wayne's verve was good enough for a third spot, worth \$1,000 of Chevrolet's money—and earned him a place on *Skiing's* test team." But that was it.

Ski ran a November 1971 cover of a hot dog—a skier with skis akimbo, obviously hot-dogging. The caption read, "Cover photo by Roshkind shows Tom Spencer doing one of his aerial airplane turns at the edge of a ravine on the back bowls of Vail." And that was all *Ski* ran on freestyle in the 1971-72 publishing season.

But looking back, the calendar year 1971 had been a grand start toward mainstream recognition. There had been four pro freestyle meets. And there had been a USEASA amateur freestyle circuit in the Northeast. The signs were all pointing upward.

The year 1971, then, marked the emergence of freestyle as a separate, distinct, and equal part of the sport of skiing.

Part III: conclusion of the special feature on the roots of freestyle will appear in a later issue of the journal



tips and tales

historical news and views



The Old Headwall

The New England Ski Museum, now under the leadership of its new executive director Jeff Leich, has mounted an exhibit celebrating the most storied slope in New England, the Tuckerman Ravine Headwall on Mt. Washington, New Hampshire. A trip to "the Ravine" comprised an annual walk-up rite of spring for macho skiers in the Northeast during the first four decades, 1920-1960, of alpine skiing in the U.S. The first skier to descend the wall no-fall was the Olympic team captain Charlie Proctor in 1928.

The wall was first schussed in 1932 by Norwegian Olympic jumper Sigmund Ruud who hiked up with Joe Dodge and started from progressively higher points until he made it all the way in one swoosh.

The most famous swoosh was the first schuss in competition, accomplished in 1939 by newly-immigrated Austrian racer Toni Matt, teaching under Hannes Schneider at North Conway. The occasion was the third running of the American Inferno from the

top of Mt. Washington to Pinkham Notch.

Most first descents down the really perilous Headwall gullies were made by Brooks Dodge in the 1940s and 1950s, prefiguring the widespread sport now known as Extreme Skiing.

The 1960 Jay Olympics Video

John Jay, who was in 1950-1970 America's classic ski lecture film maker, has put a version of his 1960 Squaw Valley film on video. It is unusual in that he had a dozen cameras going during the Games but has the same split-second timing in his wry commentary. To get it, send \$27.95 to Jay, Box 3131, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067; its undertext is the tough going faced by racers in the days before grooming, moguls in the gs course, stuff like that.



An Apple for the Teachers



Past instructors: Pfeiffer, Charette, Wheeler, McConkey

Celebrating 60 Years of Skiing 1938-1968 this July were Mt. Tremblant, Gray Rocks, Mt. Tremblant Club, Ville Bellevue, and Manoir Pinoteau: 600 instructors showed, notably I.S.H.A. Vice President Doug Pfeiffer, who taught at Gray Rocks' Snow Eagle Ski School 1947-50; Real Charette, who was Gray Rocks' director 1948 to 1982; Lucille Wheeler winner of the 1956 downhill Olympic bronze; Jim McConkey, at Gray Rocks 1947-1948. Mt. Tremblant owners, Intrawest, had preserved under dustard a swath of snow 90 by 1,000 feet. On July 4, this snow served for three hours as the stage for races and demonstrations recapitulating ski technique through the decades.

Laila Schou-Nilsen became the first woman to win an Olympic downhill, taking the event in the 1936 Garmisch Olympics. The only alpine medals offered were combined slalom and downhill; by placing 5th in the slalom, Laila took the bronze alpine combined.

She competed sparingly after that, satisfied with winning the Norwegian women's combined championship three times. Heeding her love of other sports, she won the world speed-skating championships in 1937 and 1938, took 73 individual titles in Norway's tennis championships, and she raced in the Monte Carlo rally four times.

Laila was 17 when she won the Olympic downhill at Garmisch, and was 79 when she died at her home in Norway last July.

Four Worthy Skiers Enter Hall of Fame In the Class of 1998



Elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1998: John Woodward (above) began skiing on a pair of solid Strand skis in 1929. He became Pacific Northwest Intercollegiate champion in 1936, commanded the Mountain Training Center of the 10th Mountain Division at Camp Hale in 1943, and its successor, the Mountain Training Group, comprised of all the division's top instructors. In Italy, he became Executive Officer (as Major) of the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry. As a civilian, he ran the *Seattle Times* ski racing school at Snoqualmie and in 1950 became a partner in Anderson and Thompson, the pioneer ski equipment manufacturer and distributor known all over the ski world as *A&T*. He patented the sport's first flexible heel release binding.

Anna McIntyre was the organizer *par excellence* of all 11 World Cups held at Waterville Valley, New Hampshire, important races in establishing U.S. resorts as able to put on competitions that bore comparison with the best in Europe. She was instrumental—as author of the first snowboard competition rule book and Chairman of the USSA Snowboarding Committee—in snowboarding's acceptance by the FIS as a recognized international competition.

William Tanler founded *Northwest Skier*, *Jackson Hole Skier*, became Executive Editor of *Ski* in the 1960s, founded *Ski*

Racing in 1968, still the only national publication covering competitive skiing and snow boarding exclusively. At *Ski Racing*, Bill covered 142 individual World Cup competitions. In 1979, he launched *The Ski Industry Letter*, still being published today by fax. In 1986, he started *Ski Tech* to meet the industry's need for a trade publication on equipment and tuning services. (Tanler was also awarded I.S.H.A.'s Lifetime Achievement Award in Ski Journalism in 1998.)

Warren Witherell coached the Northwood School at Lake Placid, 1960-65, where he developed Rebel Ryan; Warren founded Burke Mountain Alpine Training Center in Vermont, the first full-time racing preparatory school. Here he developed Holly Flanders and Diann Roffe of the U.S. national team. In 1972, he wrote *How the Racers Ski*, the world's first technical exposition of the mechanics and advantages of the carving turn. The book put him on a level with theoreticians Franz Höppichler of Austria and Georges Joubert of France, the men who laid the theoretical foundations for the modern turn. *How the Racers Ski* has sold over 120,000 copies since publication. In 1993, with co-author David Evrard, he wrote *The Athletic Skier* focusing on the crucial part that canting and boot fit play in competition.



Golden Fliers, an exclusive ski team at Vail's American Classic Ski Week: Ruth Altman, artist and fashion designer; Erich Windisch, longtime top Vail instructor; Rod Aller, who started the Princeton Ski Team in 1934, now a lawyer; Dick Hauserman, builder of Vail's first commercial site, owner of four ski shops; John Woodward, notable Northwest racer (see bio at left). The exclusivity comes from a requirement of having had 80 birthdays.

An Aspen-Beeckley Collection Connection



Beeckley's residence in New Hartford, Connecticut. With the group was Sandra Heath of Stowe, Vermont, who has a large collection of antique ski fashions. From the right: Mason stands next to two of the founding I.S.H.A. members, Meggs

Mason Beeckley, I.S.H.A. president, visited old friends in Aspen during a stop on his quest to find an eventual home for the Beeckley International Collection of Skiing Art and Literature, now housed in *SkiAerie*, the art gallery and library at The Parsonage,

and Dick Durrance; after that is Sandra Heath, Elizabeth Ford and Aspen ski clothing mogul Klaus Obermeyer. Mason also met with members of the Board of Trustees of the Aspen Historical Society to discuss plans for their new, ambitious concept for an Aspen history museum.

THE SEER OF SENIOR SKIING

by Cheryl Thomas

The earliest and still the only ski club restricted to skiers 70 or older is the 70+ Ski Club, headquartered in upstate New York for the past twenty years, headed until recently by the late Lloyd Lambert. It is far and away the largest of the several elder-skier organizations that have sprung up in the last two decades. How Lambert managed the successful marketing of a once-radical notion says a good deal about the development of the sport over the last two decades.

Alpine skiing was not an elder-skier game when it took hold in the 1930s in the United States. It was the sport of the adventurous, typically men and women in their twenties and thirties, hikers, outdoorsmen and women, amateur athletes. These were the kind who largely made up the group that caught the wave.

Fifty years later, many of the first alpine skiers on the scene had either retired from skiing or had begun to think about easier sport. Lambert led the movement to encourage these skiers to keep on doing it. The substantial presence thereafter of 70-year-olds in the sport was evidence of something new in the standard ski scene.

And the 50-year-olds and 60-year-olds were not far behind.

The 1996 National Skier/Boarder Opinion Survey found that skiers 55 and older made up three of every 100 skiers, or



Ninety-five years young in 1996 when this picture was taken, Lloyd Lambert shoulders pine board skis and bamboo poles standard in the era when he started skiing in 1915; sixty-two years later he founded the 70+ Ski Club

280,000. The number was projected to 380,000, or nearly 20 out of every 100 skiers by 2010. Ski resorts took notice. As a powerful additional persuader, the U.S. National Senior Sport Organization came up with statistics that said that 26% of the general population over 55 controlled 80% of the discretionary income. Baldly, if everyone over 55 stopped skiing, resorts would sustain at least a 3% hit, a diminishment which they can ill afford.

Anyone anticipating the trend to elder-

skiing 20 years ago qualifies as a genius. Into this genius slot stepped Lloyd Lambert, the first man to bring the phenomenon forcibly to the resorts' attention and to start resorts responding in terms of bargain lift ticket offers and classes run at a pace set by older instructors.

Lloyd had been prepared for his climactic accomplishment by a lifetime of volunteer organizing and publicizing in the sport, an avocation unconnected to his department store career. Lloyd became one of the



Lloyd in vaudeville, 1920

ers coming west to work in the new entertainment industry. Lloyd's father was a successful clothing store customer's man. One of his early clients was a slender comedian stage-named Charlie Chaplin. He lived in the same modest rooming house—little Lloyd used to wind up the Victrola at Chaplin's parties. Chaplin bought the first of the famed black derbies from Frank Lambert. Lloyd himself ran around with the *Our Gang* kids and grew up knowing Ben Turpin, Mabel Normand, Fatty Arbuckle and Pearl White.

In 1914, Lloyd's parents separated. Lloyd was sent back to live with his grandparents in Binghamton. And thereby became a skier. His first foray came in 1915 when as a 14-year-old, he stepped from his grandmother's back door dressed in watch-cap, corduroy riding breeches and six-buckle Arctics, shoved the Arctics into toe straps on the \$1.98 pine boards purchased at a hardware store and took his first glide into an 82-year passion.

There were few serious skiers around. The only winter resort in the East was the Lake Placid Club, which had begun staying open for sport in the winter ten years earlier. Lloyd nevertheless persisted in skiing and his lifetime of interest was interrupted only for a few years. Beginning in 1918, he enlisted in the New York National Guard at 17 for a two-year tour. Then he took up the stage. He did a stint in vaudeville in New York City in which the high point of his act was an impression of Charlie Chaplin and he wanted to go on with it, to work with Mack Sennet as a silent film comedian. But Lloyd's grandfather would have none of that. "No grandson of mine..." etc.

So Lloyd at 20 went into the department store business in Binghamton, where his sense for the dramatic soon elevated him to store display manager. In 1928, Lloyd moved to Schenectady as display manager for the large Carl Company department store.

Lloyd now rode the first ski trains to Vermont, and the Adirondacks, most often to North Creek Snow Bowl (now Gore

Mountain) in New York. In the decade after Lloyd moved to Schenectady, skiing had begun to take hold in the United States. In 1937, there were, as tallied by a survey in the *1938 American Ski Annual*, 113 ski tows in the United States. Of those, roughly ten were overhead cable lifts. The category included two sling lifts, four J-bars, and three chairlifts: the originals, at Sun Valley.

Lloyd's interest in skiing remained high even after marriage. He married Elinor Lee in 1942. The next year, Lloyd, now 42, joined the North Creek Ski Patrol. He later joined the Alpine Meadows, New York, patrol and the patrol at Bousquet's in Massachusetts.

His circle of contributions widened. In 1944, Lloyd became the ski columnist for the *Schenectady Gazette*. In 1946, he became one of the first to broadcast ski reports over the radio. His *Ski Scoops* over WPTR, Albany went on the air every winter Friday night at 5:00 p.m. with club news, conditions and interviews. Lloyd had become one of the thousands of enthusiasts taking on volunteer or low-paying work which were contributing to the growth of skiing through the critical 1950s.

This was the decade of transition from fad to recognized recreation. For the first time, during this decade, tens of thousands began spending weekends outdoors on skis in winter, the season heretofore relegated to sledding and skating, mostly by tots to teenagers. By 1955, according to a *Ski Area Management* tabulation, there were nearly 200 overhead cable lifts, mostly installed after World War II ended in 1946—and peace finally reigned for awhile.

In 1955, Lloyd moved to WGY, Schenectady. He continued on snow patrol at Bousquet's until 1965, when he retired. He had been 21 years on the roster, a man who sticks to his job. In 1966, he retired from Carl Company after 38 years and had much more time to give to his radio programs. Before long, he was broadcasting ten 15-minute programs a weekend.

In 1976, Lloyd founded the Hunter Mountain Ski Museum, mounting his own memorabilia in rows of glass cases in the huge Hunter Base Lodge. The collection included Lloyd's sealskins from the 1930s and a pair of Norwegian skis circa 1750 which he had managed to acquire.

Having arrived hale and hearty in his 70s, Lloyd began seeing, to his dismay, skiing comrades begin to hang them up. The year was 1977. Lloyd was now 75 and wanted his friends to keep on skiing. He then had the thought that cost was the key. It was wallets that gave out before the legs. As he once told a *Powder Magazine* writer, "I was getting tired of hearing my pals say they



Little Lloyd on his first try at age 14 in 1915 at Binghamton, New York

The Seer of Senior Skiing continued

didn't give up skiing because they were old, but because they couldn't afford the pricey lift tickets."

His decision was to found a senior—very senior—discount ski club whose members were 70 or more, the 70+ Ski Club. The age limit seemed to nay-sayers at the time to put things a bit late in man's biblically-allotted three-score-and-ten, but they were ignoring statistics: any 70-year-old has a decent shot at reaching 80.

The 70+ Ski Club was launched in 1977 with 34 charter members. Initially, they paid a one-time dues of \$5, and had to show legal proof of age to be in for life.

Against the then-popular perception of the seventh decade as the end of active sports, Lloyd threw all the weight he could muster. This was considerable: his ongoing radio show (which moved to WABY, Albany in 1981), his talent at giving persuasive interviews, a lifetime of contacts in the ski world, his boundless energy and genius at volunteer organization. Added up, they proved to have the power necessary to kick into orbit the off-the-wall ski club in which the youngest were septuagenarians.

Hunter Mt. was the trial balloon, the resort where the deep discounts started. "In 1977," recalls Orville Slutsky (still co-owner of Hunter, with his brother Izzy), "we were the first to offer free skiing to the 70+ Ski Club members. And we were the first place to hold a 70+ race." Both came off so well that the 70+ club still holds its annual meeting and championship race at Hunter.

The Slutskys' original charitable impulse quickly appeared to have some marketing magic. Tickets were free but these skiers had an entourage of kids and grandkids coming right along with them. All of the families ate and drank at slopeside for full price. And bought at full price at the resort shop. The 70-plus skier was not necessarily hanging back waiting for freebies, it seemed. A good percentage had the time and the money. It was the encouragement of skiing with a number of their peers they had needed.

With Hunter as the example with which to persuade capitalists, that very first season Lambert pledged 30 ski areas around the East to discount heavily to bonafide members of the 70+ Ski Club. Twice-a-season, members received a list of participating resorts, showing the offers tendered by each. The numbers rose as Lloyd signed up ever more resorts. Letters by the bagful came into his

headquarters at his home in Ballston Lake, New York. Today over 200 areas worldwide are offering discounts to the club. In the mid-1980s, membership began to rocket. Elinor Lambert enlisted as secretary as the club grew to 8,000 members and Lloyd was heard to repeat, "If I thought it would be this big, I never would have started it." As long as he was alive, he spent thousands of hours a year ministering to it,

taking nary a penny outside of expenses on major trips. And Club trips burgeoned, going to resorts coast-to-coast, to Europe, South America and New Zealand.

One longtime 70+ club member, George Lyons, summed it up by saying, "We had great trips all over the world with him and his son Dick. He took us to places we never would have seen—Bariloche, Klosters and Davos, Courmayeur and Kitzbühel." Beginning in the mid-1980s, the 70+ Ski Club experienced a deluge of sign-ups that went beyond the expectations of even an optimist like Lambert, and certainly beyond that of pundits in the sport. When the club passed the 10,000-member mark, it was a revelation. And new members were arriving at the rate of 500 a year. The radical idea Lambert had had in 1977, now turned out to be terribly appealing. Various enterprising souls founded their own 70+ ski clubs. Lloyd, having registered the club name, promptly took imitators to court.

In his 80s, Lloyd became a national figure in the sport. In 1988, he was given the North American Ski Journalists' Golden Quill Award for contributions to skiing. Europeans gave Lloyd special awards at Klosters and Cortina. He appeared in 60 TV shows worldwide as the leading exponent of senior skiing, and was listed in *Who's Who* from 1992 through 1997.

At age 97, his health declined, and last year Lloyd died after a brief illness. His son Richard became Executive Director, a youngster of 69 not quite yet eligible to join his own club. Dick says that his conversations with members had long since convinced him that community rather than cash was the main motivation for joining. "It was always the camaraderie. People quit skiing when they have no one to ski with." National Senior Games executive Phil Godfrey backs this up, saying that the social aspects of senior sports outrank the benefits of fitness as a draw to joining. "A treadmill can keep them fit, but it can't provide the social connection of sport."

In 1989, the PSIA-E Education Foundation catalogued the desires of senior skiers. In the responses, social aspects were, hands-down, given the most importance. Senior skiers prefer skiing with, and taking lessons from, their peers, no surprise.

The 70+ members are not your once-down-the-bunny slope skiers. They typically have more onslope days each season than the 7.2 average reported by the National Sporting Goods Association



Lloyd wore No. 1 in all 70+ races

Station flyer featured Lambert

Courtesy of WPTV-TV

WPTV 1240 ON YOUR DIAL
SIXTH STATIONARY, INC.
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Every Friday
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LLOYD T. LAMBERT
"SKI SCOOPS"

Music
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Sports
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WPTV 1240
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A black and white photograph of Lloyd Lambert, an elderly man with glasses and a beard, smiling. He is wearing a dark jacket and appears to be in a studio setting.

for all U.S. skiers. Average number for ten individuals pulled randomly from responses to a 70+ Ski Club survey last spring was 19.

The 70+ Ski Club is not the only club in the movement. The Over The Hill Gang, which skiers can join at the barely adult age of .50, was founded in the same year as the 70+ Club; founder Tom Stein says, "It all started when three of us who worked as weekend instructors at Copper Mountain, and who happened to be over 50, started wondering what happened to all the older skiers. There just didn't seem to be any around. Each of us invited five older people to come up and ski with us one Saturday. We had a blast. After that...once they found they had others their own age to ski with, they kept coming." Over The Hill Gang International today has 6,500 members.

The Professional Ski Instructors of America Eastern now has a program designed to hold the interest of older skiers. Regional organizations are proliferating. The Ancient Skiers, out of Seattle, founded in 1981, has over 500 members.

But still it is the 70+ Ski Club which most typifies the rationale of skiing on. Club member, Louis Marchiony, says, "The 70-plus patch is a great conversation piece whenever you are off skiing on your own, an instant introduction when you see someone else wearing one. You connect." Lloyd Lambert spent his last 20 years cultivating these connections. Joyce Gephhardt, 70+ Ski Club secretary after Elinor Lambert died in 1984, says of Lambert, "He loved to talk and was a great storyteller. He liked to organize and get things going for people."

Lloyd's story, then, answers the historical question of why this man in particular managed to successfully further something looked at as a crazy idea. Lloyd loved skiing, he was a formidable organizer, he had influence in the Northeast—and he had started skiing at the turn of the century. No one but Lloyd would have had the idea, or the will and capacity to make it work.

In a larger sense, Lloyd typifies those thousands of volunteers, diverse but true-blue skiers, who did so much to put the sport on a fast track. Lloyd's tale resonates to the historic chord struck by skiing's postwar sports-builders, volunteer organizers and gung-ho popularizers of the time when skiing was as much about what one could give to the sport as what one could get from it.

In almost everything Lloyd did, he was steadfast, and in for the long haul. Club member Basil Evangelisti recalls, "Lloyd was there at every race. He was always the first down the course, wore number one. No matter what, Lloyd would be there." It was to acknowledge this steadiness, dedication and this spirit that a crowd of Lambert family and friends gathered during the 70+ Ski Club's annual meeting at Hunter in March to witness Lloyd's ashes scattered over the Hunter summit.

A leading ski industry figure throughout the postwar era,

Wolfgang Lert, said, "Lambert was an important personality in Eastern ski promotion—the 70+ Ski Club is an amazing organization."

And Lloyd was an amazing man. His friend Orville Slutsky says, "Lloyd Lambert was skiing right up to the age of 95. You'd never know it, but he told me when he was younger, he had chronic health problems. The doctors suggested his family move out of Binghamton to open country where he could get more fresh air. He got the fresh air. Outlived all those doctors, and then some." *



The 1987 annual race at Hunter on the 10th anniversary of founding the club

SENIOR SKIING SOURCES

70+ SKI CLUB: Dick Lambert, 1633 Albany St., Schenectady, NY 12304; phone 518 346-5505; \$10 a year, \$15 a couple; group trips to American and European destination resorts; annual meeting and race at club's home resort of Hunter Mountain, New York.

OVER THE HILL GANG INTERNATIONAL: Donna Rima, 1820 West Colorado Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80904; 719 389-0022; \$35 a year, \$65 couple; week-long tours; ski days in Colorado resorts at discount; Chapters: Orange County, Los Angeles, Ventura, Denver, Colorado Springs, Dallas, Great Lakes, Chicago, Connecticut, Chesapeake, New York-New Jersey.

ANCIENT SKIERS: Irv Pratt, 7233 80th SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040; phone 206 232-0388; lifetime membership single or couple \$100; weekend trips; annual Sun Valley trip; bi-annual banquet with film program and Northwest Ski Hall of Fame.

PROFESSIONAL SKI INSTRUCTORS OF AMERICA—EASTERN—EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION: Gwen Allard, 1-A Lincoln Avenue, Albany, NY 12205; phone 518 542-6095; lesson and social programs by the day or by the week involving 50 resorts in the Northeast; instructors are age-matched and have special training; program's home resort of Windham, New York, runs an extensive learning program including lectures on ski and health topics.

First of All



As Lang demonstrates in 1937, his pole was strong, flexible

Otto Lang and his pioneer steel pole

Otto Lang introduced his pioneer steel ski pole in 1937. As far as the currently available historical record shows, it was the first. Ed Scott knows ski pole history well and can remember no earlier steel pole, although he does recall an aluminum one at about the same time.

Otto had arrived on these shores in 1935 as a pioneer teacher, fresh from the Hannes Schneider Ski School in St. Anton. He came at the invitation of Katharine Peckett and spent the winter of 1936 teaching with Sig Buchmayr at Peckett's-on-Sugar Hill, New Hampshire. Peckett's terrain was mostly cow pasture, and Otto was relieved to get away that spring to the Northwest where he starred in a film shot on Mt. Rainier. His role was a solo, doing all the skiing in the first U.S. theater-release ski film. *Ski Flight* opened as a short at Radio City Music Hall in 1937.

Otto decided to stay at Rainier. He established his own official Arlberg ski school there at Paradise Lodge the next winter. And, like any good entrepreneur, he looked for tie-ins. First, he designed a ski for Anderson and Thompson, the early ski equipment firm in Seattle (advertised in the brochure at right). Otto then proposed that A&T sell a steel pole made to his design. The germ of the idea had come in 1935: no sooner was Otto off the boat in New York than Katharine Peckett, in spite of a promise to the contrary, had

committed him to demonstrations on an indoor ski slide at B. Altmans. Otto went along with good grace.

Between demonstrations, he spotted a set of True Temper golf clubs with stepped steel shafts. Hefting and bending this shaft, Otto decided it had a role to play in skiing by doing away with the splintering bamboo poles standard in the sport. So, when A&T approved, Otto went to the golf shaft makers, American Fork and Hoe in Cleveland and contracted with them to make the shaft with a special curved tip. The prototype lived up to expectation: strong and flexible. Wendell Trosper, a Mt. Rainier climbing guide who worked for A&T, assembled the shaft, grip and basket on every Lang pole sold. Unfortunately, A&T's promotion budget was small for introducing a national product and it sold slowly.

In 1939, World War II erupted in Europe. Soon, the demand for steel was so great American Fork and Hoe turned their entire manufacture to lucrative war products. In the meantime, Otto had gone on to co-direct the Sun Valley ski school with Friedl Pfeifer. Sun Valley closed in 1942 after the U.S. entered the war.

Other metal poles came out after the war and A&T never revived the Lang pole. Sun Valley reopened and Otto returned to head the ski school, reigning as one of the country's most influential directors; he spent summers in Hollywood learning to direct Hollywood films. His mentor was Darryl Zanuck, whom Otto had taught to ski at Sun Valley. Zanuck in turn had made Otto second unit director for *Sun Valley Serenade*. In time, Otto produced, then directed, Hollywood films. Four of them garnered Academy Award nominations. Between his twin careers, Otto had no time to pursue pole-making. The field was left clear for aluminum poles. By 1960, the Scott version dominated the market, banishing the bamboo pole.

forever. The only known surviving pair of Lang poles were given to Otto by Trosper and donated by Otto to the Ketchum-Sun Valley Heritage and Ski Museum.

Otto's successes continued almost unbroken to this day. In 1993, his autobiography, *Bird of Passage*, sold out. In 1998, the Seattle International Film Festival honored *White Witch Doctor*, which was produced by Otto and starred Robert Mitchum and Susan Hayward. *Ski Flight*, too, was honored by a showing at the festival.

Even given all his success, Otto occasionally regrets his one little failure to follow up, believes that with a bit of luck lifetime annuity.

on the promise of his steel pole. Otto believes that with a bit of luck it could have given him a nice little lifetime annuity.



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